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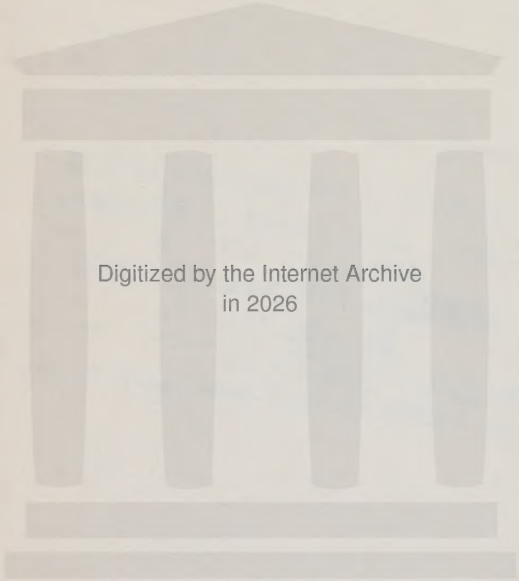
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O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD

PRIZE STORIES of 1922

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O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD

PRIZE STORIES
of 1922

CHOSEN BY THE SOCIETY OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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DEDICATED
TO
THE MEMORY OF

EDWARD JEWITT WHEELER

MARCH 11, 1859—JULY 15, 1922

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Snake Doctor. By Irvin S. Cobb	1
Innocence. By Rose Wilder Lane	23
Gold-Mounted Guns. By F. R. Buckley	36
As a Dog Should. By Charles Alexander	44
Art for Art's Sake. By Richmond Brooks Barrett	56
Tact. By Thomas Beer	71
The Kiss of the Accolade. By James W. Bennett	91
The Sixth Shot. By Samuel A. Derieux	113
The Jinx of the "Shandon Belle." By R. de S. Horn	124
His Sacred Family. By Helen R. Hull	139
The Horse of Hurricane Reef. By Charles Tenney Jackson	159
Old Peter Takes an Afternoon Off. By O. F. Lewis	177
Ig's Amok. By Gouverneur Morris	196
The Anglo-Saxon. By Wilbur Daniel Steele	210
"The Writer-Upward." By Albert Payson Terhune	234
Twilight of the God. By Mary Heaton Vorse	250

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INTRODUCTION

Committee Room,
O. Henry Memorial Award,
December 30, 1922.

RAGGED and gutted magazines heap our four corners. From these architectural ruins have been wrested the precious and semi-precious gems of fiction now decorously arranged on the long desk. Twelve parcels, one for each month, they enclose some three hundred specimens, worn smooth from use. Of these, according to assays and tests, one third is good. Of the one third, more than half is very good. Of the somewhat less than one half, classed as superior, half is treasured up for the new setting, the fourth volume of O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories.

The Committee of Award, sure they have ransacked and saved cannily, heave sighs over the accomplished work of the year and cast hopeful eyes toward the fat pile of periodicals dated January, 1923.

"We have a good book!" affirms the ultra-conservative member.

"The best yet," improves the enthusiast.

"But what loads of journalism!" The pessimist glances toward the rubbish that awaits the junkman.

"Professional writers are to blame for cheapness, for making journalism of the art," says one who has found only polished pebbles.

"But don't scorn journalism," the enthusiast warns. "If the office of the short story is to entertain legitimately as many individuals of society as it may, then the story that perishes after it has been read by thousands is worth as much as the one that lasts ten times as long and is read by one tenth the number," she concludes breathlessly, but triumphant.

"Not an idealistic concept, but——" somebody hangs fire.

"Anyway, we have excavated the best, which we respectfully offer to the smaller number that values quality."

"Is it literature?" The cynic implies a negative, rather than hopes for a positive reply. "Aren't we taking ourselves too seriously?"

"Ask me twenty years from now," the optimist grins. "The fact is that whether stories are journalism or art or literature is beside the point when we are seeking good ones. Too many things are not stories. At least, we aid time in storing up a few that might be lost."

The Committee, concerned in their task with no other form of writing, have been asked to review the requisites of a good short story. They have not changed their minds appreciably since 1919 when they expressed, though in somewhat different fashion, their credo.

I believe certain laws govern the creation of the short story.

I believe the short story should be short enough to be read at a single sitting. But I do not forget that the reader on a magazine staff, who reads because he must, reads *n* times as fast as the layman, who reads presumably for pleasure.

I believe in a unified effect. If the unity is of time and place as well as action, so much the better. But I accept a story unified in other ways, as through character, or theme, or atmosphere, or the wise use of the angle of narration.

I believe that every good story is based upon a struggle, not upon a tableau or picture. I admit that a complication enlarges and enriches the primary struggle.

I believe in the aids of suspense, of clues, of dramatic forecast, of surprise and all the other arts at the story teller's command. For I know that to-day's sophistication is not so easily appeased as was the simplicity of yesterday. Nor do I forget that surprise was esteemed even in the folk ballads of Chaucer's day. I remember "Baby Lon."

I believe that development through scenes contributes to the reader's entertainment, since every reader prefers the action of characters, as far as possible, without the interpolation of the author.

I believe that an underlying truth, which is not propaganda or didacticism, exists at the basis of every good story.

I believe that every story which lives, even momentarily,

exists through a triangle of forces: the author's afflatus conveyed through the characters and firing the reader.

I believe that if a story lives beyond threescore hours and ten it must be possessed of the intangible quality known as style.

Why, then, are some two thirds of the first lot thrown back with the originally discarded? Occasionally the Committee are asked why they did not select a certain story or stories.

Let us, for the first time, sum up those reasons which lie at the bottom of the rejected heap. It should be understood, however, that the Committee do not of necessity agree on any given illustration. They agree on the principle.

Condensed novels or biographies are not short stories. They may be worth more; they may take a higher place in the literature reflective of the early twentieth century. They are perhaps the strongest rivals of the short story as entertainers: surely they are increasing in number and quality. "Old Man Minnick," by Edna Ferber (*Woman's Home Companion*, June) and her "Home Girl" (*Pictorial Review*, November) illustrate this emphasis upon character. Anthony Rud's "Just Dog" (*People's*, March 25), recommended by Vincent Starrett, of *The Wave*, in giving a life history of Peter seemed to the Committee to swing out of the story group into that of biography and character study. But the Committee occasionally pass a mixed form. Such an instance is "Some People Say They Are Married," by Alma and Paul Ellerbe (*Century*, April).

Any story too long from overwriting outruns its own chances for success. R. G. Kirk's "Skull Cracker" (*Saturday Evening Post*, September 2) exemplifies this fault.

The tale that is too obvious lacks the artistry which conceals art. The finished story should bear no sign of consciousness, no label of effort. Two of the Committee felt that Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews' "Yellow Butterflies" (*Ladies' Home Journal*, November) was too patently written around the theme of the Unknown Soldier. So George Allan England's "Drops of Death" (*Munsey's*, January) rests too obviously and easily for its effect upon a scientific discovery. It is but natural that frequently a story appears transparent to one member and not so to another. Among any four or

five judges, the personal predilection cannot but have its influence. Thomas Beer's "Rope" (*Saturday Evening Post*, March 25) seems to the Chairman deftly to incorporate an episode in the life of Mark Twain. But the specialist in slang wrote roundly on her copy "Nope" and so damned it.

A story otherwise excellent may fail to convince. An instance is Stephen Vincent Benét's "Elementals" (*Cosmopolitan*, April). Many magazines are burdened with inferior examples. Underlying weaknesses are too apt conjunction of time and place and character; the coincidence, moreover, is usually found in the climaxes. Exaggerated heaping of horror may push melodrama past the confines of credulity. Bill Adams's "Time Comes" (*Adventure*) overflows the reader's capacity and is lost. If the reader cannot "believe" during his progress through a narrative, he will soon forget it.

The author may stop short of evolving his form. He leaves it in the matrix, does not free it wholly from the bedrock material. A tantalizing instance is Will Burt's "Things That Live Under the Floor" (*McClure's*, May). Similarly, the stories of Meigs Frost which have appeared in *Short Stories* and the *Blue Book* fall short of perfected form.

Akin to the preceding fault is that of too rambling, loose, or incoherent structure. But this imperfection results from weakness in composition and inattention to the organism rather than from failure to dig out the raw story. "Mo' Rain—Mo' Res'," by Edgar Valentine Smith (*Wayside Tales*, February) has valuable features; but it peregrinates like the vagus nerve. Dependence upon the sequential method, whereby one fact follows another without apparent plan or preparation, proves tiresome. Without cohesion or tenseness the story holds few readers; only intrinsic superinterest in every succeeding event will compensate.

Most people are moved by the same things. But the degree of emotion is not the same. Hence it is that the Committee sometimes divide on sentiment. "The Ineligibles," by Charlotte E. Lewis (*Good Housekeeping*, July), relies, in the minds of certain members, upon the flag and the veteran too apparently for its effect. Falling, for them, under the "obvious" group, its sentiment becomes ineffective. To others, it is tender and sincere. The difference in the

appreciation of humour continues to be a strain on the affections. Ellis Parker Butler's "Use Common Sense" (*Munsey's*, July) is a bit of fluff, light as the package that troubled Mike. What is an expressman to do with a parcel lighter than air? How can he charge for it? Mr. Butler's disposal of the question is too humorous for anything short of chuckles by some of the Committee. Others regard it sternly, unsmilingly.

So the story told chiefly in dialect may find adherents or objectors. Peter B. Kyne's "The Curious Tribe" (*Cosmopolitan*, September) is a touchstone. And, again, the Committee may disagree in the interpretation of a story or in its fulfilment of requirements. Alexander Hull's "Bain's Hole" (*Scribner's*, April) split the Committee in half.

The professional, suave, utterly emasculated and conventional story of silk-sheathed heroines, charming villains, and even more charming heroes unfortunately flourishes. On such reading the young feeds ravenously and vows, if it is feminine and it usually is feminine, to grow up to wear rich robes and to shine, star-like, in a heavenly sovereignty of beauty and indolence. Here is implied the real objection to such glossy stories. But they are result as well as cause, and cannot be held too greatly to account. What does the age of materialism demand? There is always the happy thought that other youthful readers will be cheered and will dream dreams beautiful to them, while they continue to hang from the straps and to tread the million travelled pavement to the conflict that is the day's work.

The following list is of stories that rank highest with the Committee:

Alexander, Charles, As a Dog Should (*Collier's*, November 11).

Barrett, Richmond Brooks, Art for Art's Sake (*Smart Set*, April).

Bechdolt, Jack, The Listener (*Munsey's*, April).

Beer, Thomas, Tact (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 1).

Bennett, James W., The Kiss of the Accolade (*Short Stories*. October 10).

Boogher, Susan M., An Unknown Warrior (*Junior League Bulletin*, January).

Buckley, F. R., Gold-Mounted Guns (*Red Book*, March).
Cobb, Irvin S., Snake Doctor (*Cosmopolitan*, November).
Cooper, Courtney Ryley, Brutes (*Wayside Tales*, March).
Derieux, Samuel A., The Sixth Shot (*Red Book*, July).
Ellerbe, Alma and Paul, "Some People Say They Are Married" (*Century*, April).
Fitz-Hugh, Mildred, The King's Son (*Everybody's*, March).
Hartman, Lee Foster, Honest Luella (*Hearst's International*, May).
Hopper, James, The Ship in the Bottle (*Good Housekeeping*, February).
Horn, R. de S., The Jinx of the *Shandon Belle* (*Collier's*, September 30).
Hull, Helen R., His Sacred Family (*Harper's*, November)
Jackson, Charles Tenney, The Law of the Trap (*Short Stories* April 25); The Horse of Hurricane Reef (*Short Stories* September 10).
Lane, Rose Wilder, Innocence (*Harper's*, April).
Lewis, O. F., The Return of Ainsworth (*Collier's*, January 28); Old Peter Takes an Afternoon Off (*Popular*, April 7).
Miller, Helen Topping, Rumly Rides the Ridge (*Short Stories*, January 10).
Morris, Gouverneur, His Wonders to Perform (*Cosmopolitan*, September); Ig's Amok (*Cosmopolitan*, December).
Mumford, Ethel Watts, Across the Border (*Pictorial Review*, October).
Peck, Leland W., Yellow (*Sunset*, January).
Price, Edith Ballinger, The John B. Mason (*Collier's*, November 4).
Springer, Fleta Campbell, Realities (*Harper's*, January).
Squier, Emma Lindsay, Joe Martin, Gentleman (*Good Housekeeping*, April).
Steele, Wilbur Daniel, The Anglo-Saxon (*Harper's*, August)
Stone, Elinor Cowan, What Do We Wear? (*Century*, September).
Terhune, Albert Payson, Samson and One Philistine (*Saturday Evening Post*, March 25); "The Writer-Upward" (*Popular*, May 20).
Vorse, Mary Heaton, Twilight of the God (*Harper's*, November).
Williams, Ben Ames, One Crowded Hour (*Saturday Evening*

Post, May 6); A Use for Clods (*Saturday Evening Post*, October 14).

Wilson, Margaret Adelaide, The Side Winder's Mouth (*McClure's*, September).

The following list is of stories that rank high with a majority of the Committee:

Allen, James Lane, Miss Locke (*Century*, March).

Beer, Thomas, Fifty and Fifty (*Harper's*, September); Shock (*Saturday Evening Post*, December 9).

Cabell, James Branch, The Thin Queen of Elfhame (*Century*, December).

Canfield, Dorothy, A Great Love (*Outlook*, February 8).

Cohen, Rose, Natalka's Portion (*Pictorial Review*, February).

London, Frank, Man Going East (*Red Book*, November).

Connell, Richard, Honor among Sportsmen (*Saturday Evening Post*, February 4).

Cooper, Courtney Ryley, and Creagan, Leo F., The Inevitable Third (*Short Stories*, May 10).

Dobie, Charles Caldwell, The Vision (*Century*, January).

Engle, William I., Sentenced (*Brief Stories*, July).

Flavin, Martin G., The Other Man (*Sea Stories*, May).

Freedman, David, Mendel Marantz, Housewife (*Pictorial Review*, April).

Gilbert, Kenneth, A Debt of the Wilderness (*Sunset*, January).

Gilkyson, T. Walter, Empty Bottles (*Scribner's*, February).

Goldman, Raymond Leslie, The House of the Crying Child (*Metropolitan*, April).

Hart, Frances Noyes, Philip the Gay (*Ladies' Home Journal*, February)

Hartman, Lee Foster, The Parrot (*Red Book*, January)

Hergesheimer, Joseph, Wasps (*Saturday Evening Post*, May 13).

Horn, R. de S., The Yellow Streak (*Sea Stories*, June).

Hunt, Lian, King of the Reef (*Pictorial Review*, January).

Jones, Thane Miller, The Drudge (*Scribner's*, May).

Kahler, Hugh MacNair, Relativity (*Saturday Evening Post*, January 7).

Lathrop, Harley P., The Yellow Throwback (*Detective Story*, October 14).

Leinster, Murray, The Vault (*Black Mask*, August).

Lewis, O. F., Alibi (*Red Book*, March).
McCallum, Mella Russell, Modern Mary (*Munsey's*, December).
McCarty, Arthur Frederick, The Alarm Clock (*Success*, December).
Mitchell, Ruth Comfort, Five Set Forth in a Christmas Fog (*Woman's Home Companion*, December).
Moore, Frederick, Where the Law Left Off (*Munsey's*, May).
Mowrey, William Byron, Burned Out (*Brief Stories*, September).
Paine, Ralph D., The Four Stars of Destiny (*Red Book*, August).
Phelps, Milo Ray, Something New Under the Sun (*Brief Stories*, December).
Poate, Ernest M., The Man from Arcadia (*Detective Story*, November 4).
Portor, Laura Spencer, Three Wise Men (*McCall's*, December).
Post, Melville Davisson, The Woman on the Terrace (*Pictorial Review*, March); The Cuneiform Inscription (*Pictorial Review*, December).
Ravenel, Beatrice, The Trump Card (*Ainslee's*, June); A Hate Story (*Harper's*, August).
St. Johns, Mrs., The Tramp (*Cosmopolitan*, August).
Shannon, Mary J., Where Dips the Toulemene (*Argosy*, September).
Stagg, J. J., The Frame-Up (*Black Mask*, May).
Starrett, Vincent, The Elixir of Death (*The Wave*, June).
Steele, Wilbur Daniel, He That Hideth His Secret (*Harper's*, February); The Other Side of the South (*Pictorial Review*, August).
Synon, Mary, The Croupier (*Red Book*, March).
Tarkington, Booth, The Fascinating Stranger (*McCall's*, August).
Terhune, Albert Payson, The Heavier Weight (*Saturday Evening Post*, January 28).
Terrill, Lucy Stone, The Abiding Gift (*Saturday Evening Post*, September 16).
Train, Arthur, The Bloodhound (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 10).
Wallace, Carl S., Scott's Shoes (*Black Mask*, January).

Watts, Mary S., The Reward of Virtue (*Harper's*, May).
Weiman, Rita, A Law Unto Ourselves (*Cosmopolitan*, July).

From the first list the Committee chose the stories that seemed most fitting for inclusion in this fourth volume. For the first time in the history of the Committee decision was made, in selecting the prize stories, without recourse to the point system. Mr. Cobb's "Snake Doctor" was unanimously awarded the first prize; Mr. Buckley's "Gold-Mounted Guns" the prize for the best story under 3,000 words.* Mrs. Lane's "Innocence" received the votes of three members, the fourth recording a protest, as the second-best story of the year. To Mr. Cobb, therefore, goes the first prize of $500; to Mrs. Lane, the second of $250; and to Mr. Buckley the special prize of $100.

This third prize is given at the suggestion of Mr. Melvin C. Hascall, Treasurer of the Society of Arts and Sciences and member of the Administrative Committee of the O. Henry Memorial. Because of O. Henry's success with this briefer form, Mr. Hascall felt that the prize distribution should show recognition of the fact. "Gold-Mounted Guns" illustrates more fully than any other stories chosen by the Committee the O. Henry tradition. Many an incident or anecdote has consumed more words. But the significance, which may be guessed though not fully disclosed until the final paragraph, of "Gold-Mounted Guns" lifts it into the story class. Its structure conforms to the ideal since it begins near the climax, permits no dissipating waste of time, and marshalls every force toward a definite end, an end apprehended as inevitable even before it appears. The author's task in characterization was more difficult than the easy accomplishment hints; for not to betray his dénouement he had so to describe the "spare, hard-faced man" as to conform to the boy's concept throughout—which is, also, the reader's for at least part of the way. And he must conform to the reader's notion of what he should be at the more careful second reading. Without fuss, Mr. Buckley has effected this twofold requirement so as successfully to snap the whip at the close, as O. Henry liked

*At first the Committee set the outside limit for the very brief story at 2,500 words. Later they rescinded their action in establishing that limit and made it 3,000.

to do. He also maintains, almost perfectly, a single angle of narration, technical aid commandeered in numerous examples by O. Henry, as in "The Hiding of Black Bill."

In "The Best British Stories of 1922," edited by Edward J. O'Brien and John Cournos, Mr. Cournos observes that in some instances "the whole effect of a modern tale is dependent on the manner of presentation." He cites Henry James as an author who knew that manner "is needful to give life and meaning to trivial things." So, likewise, did Anton Chekhov create an artistic significance out of the uneventful lives of the bourgeoisie.

Although the mere facts of "Innocence" are of sufficient eventfulness, yet through Mrs. Lane's presentation they become charged with dimly revealed horror. Mary Alice, through whom the author transmits her material, sees through a glass darkly; she understands only in part. That the adult reader—the tale is meat not for little people or for fools—may get the truth back of the child's groping becomes the artist's problem. Not once does Mrs. Lane swerve from her firm grasp of Mary Alice's limitations; not once is the reader in doubt. The story is a perfect instance of unification through character, and more minutely of the character's point of view. "Innocence" is sure to find strong sympathy and equally strong indifference. But the fact cannot be side-stepped: whether you like it or otherwise, the method is perfect. Stories of greater magnitude and power there may be and are; but there is not one better told.

Whether art should reflect life, only the operations of life, or whether it may transcend both—though it never can, by the very nature of things—is a moot question. The Committee prefer those narratives reflective of life. If any citizen of Mississippi or Arkansas or Tennessee fails to see in "Snake Doctor" a faithfully dramatized version of life, not only in characterization but in setting and action, let him say wherein the story strays. The author knows his country; the Committee know it. The most remarkable fact about the details of "Snake Doctor" is that each evokes a larger image. Suggestion and actual statement unite to produce a background in perfect focus. There are no blurred edges.

The villainous nature of Japhet Morner is not typical of the poor white. Mr. Cobb is at pains to indicate that he was

thereby different. That in the main he runs true to type is unquestioned. The other persons of the story have, likewise, stepped casually out of the backwater of existence into the fourth dimension which is the story, and have so entered into a longevity not ordinarily attainable.

Mechanically, the story is without blemish. You know it is a structure, but you enjoy the illusion of growth. You observe the care with which the parts are dovetailed and you ask suspiciously whether, after all, the author knew he was doing all the clever things he did; whether they just didn't happen. Not since his "Belled Buzzard" has Mr. Cobb approximated this story. At all points his motivation is unassailable. Jafe's real motive—to get Snake Doctor's hoard—is concealed beneath his assumed motive, to punish the man who had philandered with Jafe's wife. To prevent sympathy for the wretch on this assumed count, Mr. Cobb shows by instances of the wife's mistreatment that it was only an assumption. The stuffed snake might be difficult to accept, were it not for the careful preparation: a taxidermist is mentioned in the outset as a friend of Snake Doctor's; there is a small hoard, protected by the moccasin and his barbed-wire enforcement. Even the barbs are logical in the full revelation of a second reading.

Ambrose Bierce's instance of the snake with shoe-button eyes will recur to many readers. That story pleased years ago as "Snake Doctor" pleases to-day. The Bierce story falls behind the demands of 1922. Its buttressing influence lies in the fact that it tells of a man dying from fear under conditions far less plausible than these Mr. Cobb has dramatized. He has strengthened this plausibility by the folk-lore of the delta which has it that the snake-bitten man must drink whiskey or he will die. A guilty conscience adds its weight. The doctor hardly needed to ascribe to Morner a "rotten bad heart."

The narrative current apparently breaks at the point where Doctor Bradshaw and Jim Meloan enter into conversation. But this is, really, the final explanation or dénouement, such as Sherlock Holmes offers to Watson. The story has ended. The Doctor's summing up, albeit somewhat elongated, brings out the facts needed by the reader as by the characters of the narrative.

The Committee recommend this collection for its abundance of humour. Thomas Beer, O. F. Lewis, and Albert Payson Terhune, who have been included severally in previous volumes, meet herein. To them are added Gouverneur Morris, in satiric vein; Mary Heaton Vorse, in mordant mood; and Richmond Brooks Barrett.

In "The Writer-Upward," Logan Kirby's mine superintendent, Najib, provides the fun as he did in "On Strike" (1919). There, the squat little Syrian's shrewdness kept the Orientals at work through methods that constituted the immediate story; here, it saves Kirby and the mines from the treachery of the writer-upward, Melvin. One may chortle over Najib's peculiar English, his meddling, his astounding falsehoods, and his dubious acts the more because they are offset by his loyalty to Kirby and by Melvin's outrageous attacks. Never did boomerang recoil more sweetsomely, as Najib might speech it. The story blooms with humour of character growing out of plot that, again, rests on character.

More fantastic and ironic is "Ig's Amok." Woman's blandishments, man's beguilement, and the evolution of revolutions—Mr. Morris twinkles at these, tongue in cheek. Every reader will laugh, perhaps laugh aloud, at the slaughter episodes. Just why they are funny each reader may answer for himself. Perhaps the reader hasn't been introduced to the Pauru tribe, anyway, and it is barely possible that he has a scolding wife. He may agree with Pepilune that the aged and insane should be removed from this sphere. Certainly, no woman reader will shed tears over the untimely taking off of the heir apparent, who boasted about his future harem.

We are accustomed to grin at the anecdote which declares the first practical joker to have been our savage ancestor who bashed his brother—assuredly not our ancestor—over the head and hurled him spinning over the cliff. We say we smile at the naïveté of our ancestor. But why do we laugh at this:

> The head of the old lady went hopping and bumping across the floor of the house and the rest of her went tumbling down the ladder, hung balanced for a moment on the landing stage and then toppled off into the water with a quiet splash.

Is it because she taunted Mr. Ig through her last words and we rejoice to see her punished? Or because we are not far

removed from our Cro-Magnon predecessor? Glazed over by civilization we abhor murder as a fine art; but the cave man in all of us occasionally demands vicarious satisfaction.

But says a reader, "I don't laugh! I think it's a shame! That poor old woman and that dear missionary!" Very well, then, you don't laugh. Max Beerbohm's "Laughter" has a paragraph that covers your case. "Humour may rollick on high planes of fantasy," he declares, "or in depths of silliness." If such humour is irresistible, then those who feel it are more to be envied than those to whom only the finer kind of joke appeals. Only the emotion of love, he affirms, ranks higher than that of laughter; and the physical sensations of laughter are reached by a process whose source is mental. Humour hits one through the intellect; tragedy, through the feelings.

Mrs. Vorse's "Twilight of the God" demands a mind sensitively attuned to theme and treatment. Santos, like a god, would trample under foot the small moralities; but when he discovered that his puny wife had beaten him in the trampling, courage died in his overwhelming sense of ridicule.

"Old Peter Takes an Afternoon Off" is, alas! the final story of Huntington College.* Its humour is of the sort that verges on tears. In fact, he who smiles through the earlier portions of the Latin Professor's baseball adventure will be storing up emotion of another sort for later release. The national sport and the characters of Peter, the reporter, the publisher, and the judge are strictly of the United States. You may meet them any day of the year. In hitting off Peter as a candidate for the Ph. D. degree, Mr. Lewis describes, rather than satirizes, the life and the ambition of the modern American Scholar.

If any writer has so successfully fictionized the Yankee family at home as Mr. Beer is doing, we have yet to meet him. Mrs. Egg's common sense, her insatiate craving for food, and her adoration of Dammy; that young man's taciturnity, physical proportions and decorations, interminable cigarettes, inherited wisdom and ability to put away pounds of provender—these are the groundwork on which Mr. Beer's humour rests. Off with the old love and on with the new is

*O. F. Lewis died February 24, 1922.

a theme that has been attempted often in the limits of the brief story, usually with unsuccess. "Tact" shows the two acts in close sequence with, however, a deliberation as great as that of Adam's mental processes and a tempo as moderate as his walk.

Mr. Barrett's story is a *reductio ad absurdum* of "Art for Art's Sake." Its humour grows out of the astonishingly young octogenarian. There must be many old ladies like Mrs. Edgeworth, the reader reflects; surely, the reader would like to grow old so satisfactorily. But they seldom turn up in short stories. The originality of this work gives it a top-most place in the collection.

The remaining stories fall into no definitely marked groups. Illustrations of certain types are conspicuously missing. Animals have less frequently appeared: perhaps they were used up in 1921. Only one dog story was considered for inclusion: "As a Dog Should." It is recommended for its pathos, for its understanding of dog nature in even the humblest of the species, and for simplicity of narration. In the past, the Committee have selected two dog tales by Samuel A. Derieux. This year they chose "The Sixth Shot," illustrative of his ability in another direction. It offers a new method in duelling; it is ingenious in the many ways of maintaining suspense, and it fulfils most of the requirements for the short story of best length. Samuel Derieux, like O. F. Lewis, is represented in three out of four of these first volumes; neither will be again.* In their passing the short story has lost two of its best artists as the world has lost two of its humanitarians well known and widely loved.

Tales of the supernatural have been, also, less frequent, though it was a toss-up whether Mr. Lewis's ghostly "Return of Ainsworth" or "Old Peter" would be included. "Across the Border," by Ethel Watts Mumford, holds an admirable place in the opinion of the Committee, who recommend it as something new in metempsychosis. But after acceding to the wishes of the other members in 1921 and permitting "Aurore" to be reprinted, Mrs. Mumford felt that she could not, as one of the judges, see so soon another of her stories

*Samuel A. Derieux died February 26, 1922.

included, nor would she hear of its discussion as a candidate for the prizes.

"The Jinx of the *Shandon Belle*" is the best example of anthropomorphism found in the reading of the year. It will recall to readers of Wilbur Daniel Steele that author's "Guiablesse." But feminine contradictoriness is the spirit of the *Shandon Belle* rather than jealousy of a lady, which Mr. Steele's vessel suffered.

"The Horse of Hurricane Reef," by the author of "The Man Who Cursed the Lilies" (1921), is another Cajan story. Jean Lalande's struggle with the white devil stirringly and rhythmically sweeps into the greater struggle of horse and man to survive the hell fury of the storm. Imaginatively and poetically the action surges through the elemental passions of beast, man, sea, and wind; at last, it sinks smoothly to rest in the calm that follows strife. Whispering of present peace, the after-climax is a worthy parallel of George Meredith's "Combat on Drachenfels." Great art lies in the spirit of the telling, because it is so unconsciously harmonized with the theme. Imagination, in a too-often-forgotten sense of the word, is the force which directs the progress and puts the story in this respect at the head of all the tales included.

"His Sacred Family," by Helen R. Hull, was selected as the best study of conflict in the deep sub-strata of character. The family tradition, strong in Lynn Holt, tests his love for Constance. Miss Hull's skill consists in the balancing of forces, love and family—unit against mass—and in adding just the gradually cumulative weight that tilts the scales for clan spirit. It is, like "Innocence," a story made by its technique, though a different kind of technique. Rather, both in manner and theme, it recalls the prize story of 1920, "Each in His Generation," with, however, no suggestion of disparaging resemblance since it creates with thorough originality a world of its own. The immediate composition at every point contributes to certainty of effect, emphasizing as it does Constance's perceptions and vague misgivings, which justly foreshadow the end. Like every piece in a meticulously wrought mosaic, every sentence is needed for the complete pattern. Carefully miscroscopic in detail, the whole is of universal significance. This combination gives it a first place among the stories chosen.

Good stories of foreign setting show a decline this year. The three entertaining ones here presented are the more excellent by comparison. Besides "The Writer-Upward," noticed above, set in the land of Moab, "The Kiss of the Accolade" is of Papeete, and "The Anglo-Saxon" chiefly of Tunis.

Someone has asserted that Mr. Bennett's "Kiss" has a basis in fact. If so, it holds in abeyance the rule that a fact in life is rarely a fact in fiction. It reads like the most romantic of romances and for this quality of convincing romance the Committee found it in part acceptable. In any event, it is representatively true; for Mr. Bennett, attaché for years in foreign offices, knows the conditions of character and setting. He has woven his love interest, his politics, and his struggle between villain and heroine so as to produce a climax that brings a gasp of approbation.

"The Anglo-Saxon" was voted the best, by a long way, of Wilbur Daniel Steele's considerable number of narratives published in 1922. So much has been written in these annual introductions about Mr. Steele, that to say more would be supererogatory. Winner of the $250 prize in 1919 and of the special $500 prize in 1921, he continues to surpass even himself. In "The Anglo-Saxon" he has chosen a difficult struggle, that of heredity against environment, and has played the opposing forces in a way to keep the reader moment by moment determining and redetermining which force will win. The soul of one human being as the limited battle ground intensifies the conflict.

More than before, the Committee observed, writers from abroad have been selling their wares to American periodicals. Some of these story tellers have mastered the American form, as Kipling before them learned it from Bret Harte. "Mrs. Adis," by Sheila Kaye-Smith (*Century*, January) and "Miss Bracegirdle Does Her Duty," by Stacy Aumonier (*Pictorial Review*, September) are firmly built on unique foundations. Neither of these could be considered by the present Committee: the prizes are offered to American citizens only. Other foreign authors whose work has met foremost recognition are: Algernon Blackwood, John Galsworthy, Mary Butts, Gilbert Chesterton, Perceval Gibbon, D. H. Lawrence,

Elinor Mordaunt, Roland Pertwee, May Sinclair, Hugh Walpole, F. Britten Austin, Mrs. Henry Dudeney, Albert Kinross, Arthur Machen, W. Somerset Maugham, Achmed Abdullah, Konrad Bercovici, Beatrice Grimshaw, Marjorie Pickthall, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Pelham Grenville Wodehouse—but another score might be added.

The work of the Committee in the second half year proceeded sadly without the presence of Dr. Edward J. Wheeler. He died, after an illness of many weeks, on July 15, at Lake Placid. He was a member of the first committee appointed by the Society of Arts and Sciences to discuss plans toward the establishment of a memorial to O. Henry; he nominated the present chairman and graciously accepted a place on the permanent committee. Spite of heavy burdens of his own, he was always interested and always found time to read the many stories. A single column of the New York *Times* contains the names of the famous dead of 1922. In this small number, drawn from the world thousands, Doctor Wheeler's name occurs. There can be no better index to his service and his attainment. For ten years managing editor of the *Literary Digest*, Doctor Wheeler had been since 1905 editor-in-chief of *Current Opinion*. Besides his connection with the house of Funk and Wagnalls, to which firm he was literary adviser, he was the first president of the Poetry Society of America, an honour he held for ten years. The worlds of education and art he further touched closely through his trusteeship of Ohio Wesleyan University and his governorship of The National Arts Club. During the war he was foremost among the group of American editors invited to England as guests of the British Government; he was decorated by the French Government in recognition of his editorial services in support of the Allies. In *Current Opinion*, September, 1922, five pages are devoted to Doctor Wheeler's life and work. A symposium testifies to his qualities of human affection, gentleness, justice, and to his sympathy with every good thing throughout the world. Beneath his portrait (page 296) are inscribed words by John H. Finley:

"He recorded public opinion, but he also helped notably to elevate and ennoble it by his own opinion fearlessly expressed."

To succeed Doctor Wheeler the Committee invited his friend and associate, William Griffith, managing editor of *Current Opinion*. Mr. Griffith, a long-time friend of O. Henry, accepted the invitation and will be, therefore, the new member of the Committee.

The Committee of Award now consists of:

Blanche Colton Williams, Ph. D., Chairman
Ethel Watts Mumford
Frances Gilchrist Wood, Litt. D.
Grove Wilson
William Griffith

The Committee of Administration:

Melvin C. Hascall, Treasurer Society Arts and Sciences
George C. Howard, Attorney
Glenn Frank, Editor of the *Century*

As before, the Committee are grateful to editors, readers, and writers who make possible the continuation of this work in 1923.

Blanche Colton Williams.

New York City.

O. HENRY MEMORIAL AWARD

PRIZE STORIES of 1922

SNAKE DOCTOR

By IRVIN S. COBB

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IN THE North they call them Devil's darning needles. But in the South they are snake doctors, and for a reason. These harmless and decorative dragon flies with their slim, arrow-like bodies, their quick darting flight and their filmy wings, as though the arrows had been flecked with bits of drawn lace, are clothed down there with a curious fetish. When a cotton-mouth is sick—and if his feelings match his disposition he must be sick most of the time—the snake doctor comes hurrying to him with the medication for what ails him. Perhaps seventy-five or a hundred years ago some slave newly in from Africa saw a cotton-mouth moccasin sunning its flat, heart-shaped head on top of the yellow creek water, and along the creek came flashing one of these swift creatures seeking a perch upon which to leave its eggs, and the black man saw it suddenly check and hover and stand at poise in the air an inch above the snake's still head, and from that figured this strange bug was a voodoo bug, ministering to the ailing reptile. In such a matter any man's theory is as good as the next one's. The provable thing is that a good many of the whites and more than a good many of the Negroes believe in the fable for a fact; and nearly all of them, regardless of colour, know the libelled insect as snake doctor.

Now, one of the men I have intent to write about here was known as Snake Doctor, too; and for this, also, there were reasons. To begin with, he was very long and thin, a mere rack of bones held together under the casing of a taut yellow skin; and he had popped, staring eyes, and was amazingly fast in his bodily movements. See him slipping through the willows, so furtive and quick and diffident, with his inadequately small head, his sloped shoulders, his erratic side-steppings this

way or that, and inevitably you were reminded thereby of his namesake. To top the analogy, he lived right among the moccasins, taking no harm from them and having no fear of them, seemingly.

Along Cashier Creek, where they throve in a wicked abundance, was his regular ranging ground. His cabin stood in the bottoms near a place notorious for its snakes. They were his friends, so to speak. He caught them and with his bare hands he handled them as a butcher might handle links of sausage. He sold them, once in a while, to naturalists or showmen or zoölogical collectors; there was a taxidermist in Memphis who was an occasional customer of his. In the season he rendered down their soft fat and drew it off in bottles and retailed it; snake oil being held a sovereign remedy for rheumatism.

By such traffickings he was locally reputed to have made large sums of money. But he rarely spent any of this money so he went by the name of miser, also. Well, in a way of speaking, he was a miser; zealously he coveted what he got and kept it hidden away in the chinking of his log shack. But he was nowhere near so well-off as the community gave him credit for being. The snake business is a confined and an uncertain business and restricted, moreover, to its special markets. A dealer's stock in trade may be plentiful, as in this case, but his patrons must be sought. To be exact, Snake Doctor had ninety-seven dollars in his cache.

But swearing to the truth of this on a stack of Bibles a mile high wouldn't have made the people in the Cashier Creek country have it so. Popular opinion insisted on multiplying his means and then adding noughts. Nor could you, by any argument, have won over his neighbours, white or black, to a fair estimate of the man's real self, which was that here merely was a poor, shy, lonely eccentric touched in the head by hot suns and perhaps by spells of recurrent swamp fevers.

They had contempt for him, but mixed in with the contempt was fear. To them he was to be shunned as one having commerce on familiar footing with the most loathly and the most hated of all the creatures that crawl. There was a solitary exception to the current rule of prejudice; a single individual among them who had a human compassion for him and a measure of understanding and right appraisal of him. This

individual, curiously enough, was a woman. She was a minority of one. We'll come to her presently. The rest had forgotten his proper name or else had never heard it. By their majority voice he was Ole Snake Doctor. They knew he was familiar with the ways of the cotton-mouth; they half believed he spoke its language.

In this particular region ordinary folks believed many things that weren't so. Superstition, sprouting out of ignorance, had twisted honest nature into a myriad of perverted and detractive shapes. The innocent little blue-streaked lizard was a "scorpyun" and its sting killed. A porous white stone found in the bellies of rutting deer was the only known cure for a mad dog's bite; clap it on the wound and it clung fast like a leech and sucked the poison out. You never saw many jay-birds in the woods between dinner time and dusk on a Friday because then nearly all the jay-birds had gone below to tell the news of a malicious world to their master, the Devil. You rarely could hit a rain crow with a rifle bullet because this slim, brown, nervous bird enjoyed the special protection of old Nick. If a snapping-turtle closed his jaws down on your flesh he wouldn't let go till it thundered. A breath of warm air blowing across your path on a cool night in the woods meant a "witch-hag" had passed that way.

Or take snakes: the Prophet of Old put the curse on them forever after when in his story of the Garden he typified evil as a serpent; mankind has been enlarging the slander ever since. Moreover, in these parts, Caucasian ingenuity as regards snakes and their ways had overlaid a deep embroidery of ill repute upon an already rich background of African folklore. There was the hoop snake, which is mischievous and very deadly, and wears a deadly horn in its head, and there was the joint snake, which is a freak; both fabulous but both accepted as verities. All well-meaning snakes lay under the scandalous ban. Milk snakes, garter snakes, chicken snakes, puff snakes, blue racers and coachwhips were to be destroyed on sight; for their licking, forked tongues were "stingers" and dripped venom. If bitten by any snake your hope was first to drink all the raw whiskey you could get hold of. Or if within ten minutes after being bitten you clamped upon the wound the still-quivering halves of a young chicken which, while alive, had been split open with a hatchet or a knife,

there yet was a chance for you. Lacking either of these cures or both of them, you must expire in torment. The bitten part would swell enormously; the poison, spreading and magnifying in your blood, would rack you with hideous pains; then swiftly it would reach your heart and you were gone.

Every sort of snake was tricky and guileful but the moccasin of the low grounds the most so of all. Kill a moccasin and spare its mate, and the mate would track you for miles, set on vengeance. It was the habit of the moccasin when meat was scarce to lie beneath the yonkerpads—pond lilies, a Northerner would call them—with its head shoved up among the broad green leaves and its mouth stretched wide and gaping, a living lure for such luckless birds and bees as mistook the snare of the parted jaws with their white linings for a half-opened lily bud.

It was in accord with a quite natural law that the moccasin should be singled out for these special calumnies. Of the four venomous snakes of Temperate North America he is the least personable in looks and behaviour. He lacks the grace of his upland cousin, the copperhead, and he lacks the chivalry of his more distant kinsman, the rattler, which gives the enemy due warning before it strikes. He has none of the slimness of form nor patterned beauty of that streak of fanged lightning which lives in the palmetto scrubs, the coral snake. He is mournfully coloured and miserably shaped. The tones of dull creek mud and of stale creek slime mingle in his scrofulous mottlings. There is leprosy in the pale foxings of his lips, and dropsy in his bloat amidships. Only in the eyes of the taxidermist does he redeem himself for these manifold shortcomings. Being without bright tints to fade in the mounting, his stuffed skin needs no special varnishing to make it seem authentic. It is a poor compliment, perhaps, but his only one. On all other counts and for all other qualities he is copiously defamed and folks generally are prone to believe the worst of him.

Japhet Morner did, for one. For him, swamp water a-thrive with typhoid germs, or rancid corn pones in which the active seeds of pellagra lived, or mosquitoes carrying malaria and chancre in their bills, conveyed no sense of peril. The mosquitoes were to be endured, the water was to be drunk. And biliousness was the common lot of man, anyway. At least,

in this neck of the woods it was. But snakes, now, were different; any snake and all snakes whatsoever. He accepted for truth all the hard things that might be said of a snake. Certain other things he likewise believed, namely, that first, his nearest neighbour, Snake Doctor, held unwholesome communion with the cotton-mouths; that second, Snake Doctor had a treasure in money hid away in his shack—on this point he was very sure; and that third, the same Snake Doctor was entirely too fond of his, Japhet's, wife, Kizzie Morner, and she of him.

So it would appear he had a triplet of reasons for holding the other in disfavour—envy of him for his stored wealth, a gnawing suspicion from seeing in him a potential philanderer, and finally, that emotion of fearsome distrust bred out of stupidity and credulity which his kind were likely to have for any fellowman fashioned in different likeness from the run of them. That the shambling, soft-brained Snake Doctor was as sexless as a dirt clod would have been apparent to any straight-seeing observer; and it should have been as plainly visible even to this husband of hers that Kizzie Morner was a good woman and an honest one. But the jaundiced eye sees everything as yellow, and yellow is the colour for jealousy, too, and it suited Japhet Morner's mood to brew jealousy in his mind. Brewing it steadily there was strengthening his will for the putting through of a private project which for a long time he had been conning over in his thoughts. The issue came to a head on a certain day.

It was a day in that dreary season of the year when the birds have quit singing in the daytime and the locusts have started. Summer had sagged as though from the sheer exhaustion of its own wasted fervour. The lowland woods had lost that poisonous green sprightliness which came to them in early April and lasted until the August hot spell set in. Even the weeds, which in the bottoms grew rank and high and close-set, almost, as canes in a canebrake, were wilted and weary looking. The sun had come up that morning behind clouds. In the middle of the forenoon the clouds still banked together to hide the heavens, but the heat seemed intensified and pressed the unstirring air close down to the burnt earth. As Japhet Morner came out of the timber into the famished clearing behind his house the sweat dripped from him and

he panted in the close, still humidity. His two dogs trailed him, their tongues lolling. One of them brushed against his leg. He hauled off and fetched the dog a sound kick in the ribs. He was not in a happy humour.

At sun-up, after a breakfast of cold scraps left from the night before, he had gone down to Cashier Creek to get a bait of sunfish. If he were lucky he might catch a catfish for his string. He had no luck, though. The creek was shrunken; it was lower than he ever remembered seeing it. The drought had sucked up its strength. At the shallows it was no more than a thin, sluggish trickle. In deeper places there scarcely was current enough to keep twigs and dropped leaves moving on the unrippled coffee-coloured surface.

Japhet fished and fished and was rewarded with no nibbles whatsoever; seemingly, even the littlest fishes were too languid to bite at the worms he dangled for them in likely spots. He came downstream to the Big Hole, so called, where, an eighth of a mile up from Snake Doctor's shanty, the creek widened to thrice its usual breadth. Here a tight wedge of driftwood blocked the waters. Each successive freshet added flotsam to the rude dam—lost cross-ties, uprooted trees, corn stalks, chips, dead weeds, sticks. Ordinarily this lesser riffle would cover the pool so thickly that, with the top dressing of cream-coloured foam, there was created the simulation of a solid footing; a stranger might have been pardoned for believing he could walk across and keep dryshod. But now all here was clear of gently eddying débris. The consumed stream, instead of slapping against the spanning driftage, ran under it with an oozy, guzzling sound. Directly in the middle there was a busy little whirlpool, funnelling downward.

On one of the lowermost of the bared logs a cotton-mouth was twisted up, taking his ease in the congenial fever warmth. He was a big fat one—fully two feet long and as thick through his girth as a boy's arm. From the bank edge above Japhet saw him and looked about for something to throw at him. In a section where gravel is rare and all rock formations are buried a hundred feet down under the silt, the verb "to stone" is neither used nor known. Your weapon invariably is a "chunk" and with it—a hard clod or a lump of wood or whatever it is—you "chunk" away at your target. The man found a sizable missile, a heavy, half-rotted sycamore bough,

and he snapped it off to suitable length and flung it, twirling, at the motionless mark. His aim was good. The stricken snake flapped out of coil and dragged its broken loops from sight into an interlacing of naked limbs on the farther side of its log. The stick bounced hard and splashed in the pool. Japhet saw how then it swirled around and around and then, briskly, was sucked beneath the jam. With a quickened curiosity he moved downstream a rod or two and waited. Although the jam was now, so to speak, a suspension bridge, and in places stood inches clear of the water, the stick did not emerge into view below it. No drift showed there, either; the creek for a space flowed clear of rubbish. Evidently, objects caught in that small whirlpool above were carried in and under to lodge and be held fast by some submerged trap-work of soaked and sunken limbs. Probably they would stay there for months, perhaps stay there always. Turning the matter of the phenomenon over in his mind, he flung away his bait can, spun his fishing cane so that the line wrapped around it, and made off through the woods for his home, nearly a mile away. The two dogs racked along at his heels. Coming out of the woods one of them made the mistake of nudging him.

Having disciplined the scrooging dog with his boot toe he slouched out into the six-acre "dead'nin'." His puny patch of corn, for lack of the hoe, was smothering in weeds. In bare spots where the thin soil was washed so close down to the underlying clay-pan that here not even weeds would sprout, the crawfish had pushed up their conical watch towers of dried mud. Tall ash boles, girdled and dead, threw foreshortened shadows across the clearing—shadows such as gallows trees might cast. His house, of two rooms and built of unpainted up-and-down planking, squatted in the inadequate shade of a stunted chinaberry tree. A well was at one corner. There was no flower bed, no truck patch, no fencing. Across the open space, with the heat waves dancing before him, the outlines of the house seemed to waver and twist like an object seen through smoke. It stood a foot from the earth on log props. Because of seepage there were no cellars in this neighbourhood. The inevitable dogs lived under the houses and bred their fleas there, and the hogs, too, if so be a house owner had any hogs.

It was nearly noon now. His wife, in a skimpy blue frock open at the throat, was cooking the midday meal, the principal meal of the three. He came up to the door and she, looking up from the cook stove where she was turning the strips of sizzling fat meat in the skillet, saw the look on his face. Her mouth twitched apprehensively. By the signs she knew when he was in one of his tantrums.

"Ketch anything, Jafe?" she asked, nervously.

"Ketch anything this weather?—whut'd you expect I'd ketch?" From his voice it might be figured that, vicariously, he blamed her for the failure of his expedition.

He hunkered down on the doorstep, his fishing pole still in his hands.

"That pore old Mist' Rives come by here a spell ago mighty nigh shook to pieces with a chill," she said, after a bit.

"Oh, he come by, did he?" His tone, purposely, was disarming. "Well, did he come in?"

"Jes' fur a minute."

"Jes' fur a minute, heh? And whut did he want?"

"He wanted could I give him somethin' fur his ailmint. He jes' about could drag one sorry foot before the other—barely could make it up here from his place. I reckon he must be down in bed with the fever by now; I could tell by the touch it wuz risin' in him when he left here and started back home ag'in. It'll be mighty pitiful, him down flat of his back and nobody there to do nothin' fur his comfort. I give him a dos't out of our Butler's Ager Drops. I would 'a' give him a little smidgin' of licker only—only——" She left the sentence unfinished. "That pore shackly Mist' Rives, he —— *Oh,* please don't, Jafe!"

Turning, he had cut viciously at her with the long cane. She shrank back as it whipped through the air, and took the lashing stroke on her forearm, thrown up to fend off the blow.

"Mist' Rives! Mist' Rives!" He mimicked her, furiously. "How many times I got to tell you that there old hoodoo's name is Snake Doctor? Him that'd skin a louse fur its hide and taller and you callin' him 'Mist' Rives'! You'll be callin' him 'Honey' and 'Sugar' next without I learn you better. Pet names, huh? Well, I aim to learn you."

She flinched at the threat, rubbing the welt on her skin; but

he made no effort to strike her again. He sat glowering, saying nothing at all as she made hurry to dish up the food and put it before him; she hoped the weight of victuals in his stomach might dull the edge of his temper. For her part, she had the wisdom to keep silent, too. She ate on her feet, serving him between bites and sups, as was the rule in this household.

After dinner he stretched himself on the floor of the inner room. But he did not sleep. He was busy with his thoughts. One thing he had seen that day, and another thing he had heard—he was adding them together, as the first sum in a squalid equation. She drew a cane-bottom chair outdoors and sat under the chinaberry tree, fanning herself and "dipping" snuff with a peach twig which she scoured back and forth on her gums. After a little while she was driven into the kitchen. It began to rain in sharp, violent showers. The rain made the house inside no cooler; merely changed it from a bake-oven to a putrid steambox.

It was getting along toward four o'clock before Japhet emerged from the front room. He drew on his heavy knee-length boots, which he had removed before lying down, and laced them up. This done, he spoke to her for the first time since noon.

"Where's that there vi'l of licker?" he said. "Fetch it here to me."

They kept a small store of whiskey by them—all in that district did the same—for chills and possible snake bites. She brought him a pint flask nearly full and he shoved it into his hip pocket. Then immediately, as though moved by a fresh idea, he hauled it out again and put it down on the kitchen table.

"Come to think about it," he said, "I won't be needin' to tote no sperrits along with me where I'm goin'. Cottonmouths is all down in the slashes or else along the creek, and where I'll be all this evenin' is up on Bailey's Ridge in the high ground."

He was not given to favouring her with explanations of his motives or accounts of his movements. This departure from fixed habit emboldened his wife to put a question.

"Fixin' to go shootin', Jafe?" she asked, timidly.

"I aim to gun me a chance of young squirrels 'twixt now

and dusk time. I heard 'em barkin' all 'round me this mornin'. Ef they're that plenty in the low ground they'll be out thicker'n hops after the mulberries and the young hick'ry nuts up Bailey's Ridge."

He took up his single-shot rifle where it stood in a corner, and from an opened box on a shelf scooped a handful of brass shells. Then he went outside and tied up both his dogs. One was a hound, good for hunting rabbits. It was proper that he should be left behind. But the smaller dog, a black mongrel, was a trained squirrel dog. As his wife stood in the doorway, Japhet read the dumb curiosity which her face expressed.

"With the leaves ez thick ez the way they air, still huntin' is best this time o' year," he explained. "So I won't be needin' Gyp. Don't let neither one of 'em gnaw hisself loose and follow after me. Set me up a snack of cold supper on a shelf. Likely I won't git back till its plum' nighttime—gunnin' fur them squirrels is best jes' before dark, and I'll be away off yonder at the fur end of the Ridge, three miles from here, when I git ready to start back. 'Tain't ez ef I wuz rangin' in the low ground."

He turned north through the struggling corn rows and in a minute was gone from her sight into the dripping woods. He kept on going north for nearly a mile until he came to where a wild red mulberry tree stood in a small natural opening. Some of the overripe fruit, blackened and shrivelled, still clung to the boughs; and where there are mulberries in the summer woods, there squirrels almost certainly will likewise be. Very neatly he shot two young grays through their heads. Japhet was a master marksman. It was his only gentlemanly accomplishment. In all other respects he was just plain white trash, as one of his negro neighbours would have phrased it—behind Japhet's back. But unsuspected by any who knew him, he had a quality of mind which is denied many of his class—an imagination. It was in excellent working order this day. He now was proving that it was.

He tied the brained squirrels together and swung them, tails downward, over a strap of his suspenders. If needed, they were to be evidence in his behalf—part of his alibi. Next he sat down under a tree awhile. He sat out two brisk showers with the intervals between them. Then, getting up, he set off,

keeping always to the deeper woodlands, in a swing which would bring him down Bailey's Branch, now wasted to a succession of lazy dribbles, and along the skirts of Little Cypress Slash to the sunken flats edging Cashier Creek. The arc of his swing was wide. It took him all of two hours, travelling carefully and without haste through the steamy coverts, to reach the point he aimed for.

He came to halt, cautiously and well sheltered, behind the farthermost fringes of a little jungle of haw bushes where the diminishing woods frayed out in a sort of green peninsula fifty yards or so back of Snake Doctor's cabin. This was his chosen destination, so here he squatted himself down in a nest of sodden leaves and grass to wait. It had begun to shower again, good and hard. He was drenched. No matter, though; he figured he would not have so very long to wait. As it turned out he didn't.

There was no house dog to come nosing him out and barking an alarm. That Snake Doctor owned no dog would have marked him, in this part of the land, as a person totally different from his fellows, even had there been lacking other points of variance. What Snake Doctor did own was a mare, or the ruins of one. She was housed in a log crib a few rods behind the only slightly larger log cabin of her owner. Where he stooped, Japhet could hear her stirring restlessly in her stall. He might have seen her through the cracks between the logs of her shelter except for a brush fence which bounded the small weed-grown clearing.

His plan was simple enough and yet, as he saw it, fault-proof. Feeding time was at hand; soon Snake Doctor, ailing though he was, surely would be coming out from his cabin to bait the old rack-of-bones. Japhet counted on this. He'd get him then, first pop. He'd teach him what the costs were of colleaguing with another man's lawful wedded wife, and the lesson would be the death of him. At a half crouch in his ambush, Japhet told himself that his motive was jealousy; that he was here as a white man and an injured husband for the satisfaction of his personal honour and in the defense of his threatened threshold. By a conscious effort of his will he kept in the background of his mind the other purpose that had brought him on this errand. It had to do with money —with Snake Doctor's hoarded money.

The next step after the principal act would be to dispose of the body. That should be easy. He could carry the meagre frame over his shoulder for a mile, if need be. And he wouldn't have to carry it for a mile, either—only as far as the Big Hole; then lower the burden into the water and let it slip in under the log jam. The chunk he had killed the moccasin with had stayed under there; skinny old Snake Doctor would stay there, too. This done, he would come back here to the cabin and hunt out the hidden treasure. He figured it shouldn't take him a great while to find it; he already had a sort of notion as to its whereabouts, a strong clew to start on. Having found it he would circle back up through the woods, reëntering his field from the upper or northern side, with two squirrels flapping his flank for proof that he had been hunting on Bailey's Ridge. Suspicion never could touch him. Why should it?

He counted on the rain which was now falling to wipe out his tracks in Snake Doctor's horse lot. Anyhow, it probably would be days or weeks before any one missed the hermit and made search for him; in that time the tracks would have vanished, rain or no. It was greatly in his favour that when Snake Doctor was from home, or supposed to be, folks religiously refrained from setting foot on the premises. They mightily feared the cotton-mouths with which the recluse was reputed to consort. There was even a story that Snake Doctor kept for a watchman in his house the granddaddy of all created cotton-mouths and set this monster on guard when he stirred abroad. So he needed no locks on his doors nor bar for his single window, the legend amply protecting his belongings in his absences.

Ten minutes passed, fifteen, and Japhet was up on his knees, his rifle at poise, his eyes vigilant through the tops of the weeds which fringed the ambuscade. Something or other—something quick and furtive—stirred behind him. Startled, he turned his head, saw that the disturber was a belated catbird, and looked front again. In that brief space of time the victim had come into sight. Through the rain and the slackening daylight he could see, above the ragged top of the intervening brush fence, the white patch of Snake Doctor's loppy old straw hat and below the hat the folds of a dark coat drawn over a pair of hunched narrow shoulders as the wearer

of these garments came briskly toward the stable, which meant also toward him. At this distance he couldn't miss.

Nor did he. At the shot, the figure jerked backward, then went over face forward. The killer rose upright, exultation contending with tautened nerves within him. He stole up to the fence, set a foot in the tangled brushwood with intent to climb it, and then, at what he saw, froze into a poised shape of terror, his eyes bulging, his mouth opened in a square shape, and his rifle dropping from his twitching fingers.

He had just killed Snake Doctor—killed him dead with a 32-calibre slug through the head. And here on his doorsill stood Snake Doctor, whole and sound, and staring at him! And now, Snake Doctor, dead by all rights and rules, yet living, was uttering a cry and starting out of the doorway toward him.

Japhet Morner had sucked in superstitions with his mother's milk. He believed in "ha'nts," in "witch-hags" and "sperrits," believed in "conjures" and "charms" and ghosts and hoopsnakes; believed that those under the favour of infernal forces might be killed only with a bullet molded from virgin silver. And his mistake was, he had used lead out of a brass shell.

Power of motion returned to him. He threw himself backward and whirled and ran into the deep of the darkening woods, making whimpering, whining sounds like a thrashed puppy as he went.

Terror rode him into the dense timber. Exhaustion, dizziness, the feeling that he must get under the shelter of a sound roof, must have the protection of four walls about him, brought Japhet Morner out again; this was along toward midnight. The rain had ceased; the moon was trying to come forth. A short distance southeast of his place he struck a dirt road which would lead him there. Beyond the next bend he would be in sight of home.

Around the turn he saw coming toward him a joggling light —a lantern hung on a buggy or light wagon, he figured—and heard the creak of wheels turning in the muddied softness. Nameless horrors had made a fugitive of him; the fugitive instinct still possessed him. He flattened down in a clump of bushes to hide until the traveller passed.

Moving briskly, the rig was almost opposite him when,

from the other direction—the same direction he had been following—came a call:

"Hello there!—who's joggin'?"

"Whoa! Stiddy, boy!" Whoever was driving pulled up his horse, which had shied at the sudden hail. "Me—Davis Ware," he answered back. "That you, Tip Bailey?"

"Yep, hoofin' it out from the Junction, and tolerable tired, if anybody should ask you. What's bringin' you out this hour of night, Davis—somebody sick?"

"Sick nothin'! There's been hell poppin' in these bottoms to-night."

Behind the weed screen ten feet away the listener stiffened, his blood drumming in him. He knew the speakers, both neighbours of his, one of them a local leader. The foot passenger hurried up alongside the buggy; his face, inquisitive and alarmed, showed in the dim circlet of lantern light.

"What do you mean?"

"A killin'—that's what I mean. An abominable, cold-blooded killin' ef ever there wuz one."

"God! Who's been killed?"

"I'm fixin' to tell you, man. It happened jes' shortly before dusk at ole Snake Doctor's place."

"Was it him was killed?"

"Gimme time, can't you?" This Ware was one who must tell his tale his own way or not at all. "It seems like Snake Doctor's been chillin' lately. He wuz purty bad off to-day—I mean yistiddy. And so, right after supper time when the rain wuz lullin' a little, Mizz Kizzie Morner she footed it down from her place to his'n, fetchin' some physic with her and a plate of hot vittles fur him. It seems like she wuzn't feared to go there. I'd 'a' been, I'll own up, but she wuzn't. Well, purty soon after she got there it seems like he tried to git up out of his bed to go feed that old crow-bait sorrel nag of his'n. It had started in ag'in by then, pourin' down hard, and so she made him stay where he wuz. And she put on his old hat and throwed his old coat round her to keep off the wust of the wet, and she started out of the back door to do the feedin'. And no more'n she'd got outside in the lot than a shot come from the aidge of the woods right over the fence and down she went with a bullet through her brains."

"God's sake! Dead?"

"No, not dead, but same ez dead. She barely wuz breathin' here not ten minutes ago when I left her house. Old Doctor Bradshaw, he's there with her now and he says it's a miracle she's lasted this long. Well, it seems like Snake Doctor jumped up at the shot and run out to see whut had happened and there she lay a-welterin'. And him—well, he's been takin' on like all possessed ever since. I wouldn't 'a' believed he could 'a' had so much feelin' in him ef I hadn't seen him with my own eyes. It wuz him run for help, though—he did have sense enough left to do that. He found me in my tobacco patch and I dropped everything and took out fur there, and a bunch of us picked her up and toted her home on a wagon bed. She's shot in the left side of the head just over the temple; the bullet went clean through and come out on the right side."

"But who did it?"

"I'm comin' to that. 'Twuz that low-flung husband of hers done it—that's who. It seems like he must 'a' followed her down to Snake Doctor's and laid in wait fur her and felled her ez she come out. Gawd knows why onless 'twuz jes' pure pizen meanness."

"The murderin' dog! They're certain 'twas him, then?"

"Shore ez gun's iron 'twuz him. Snake Doctor ketched a quick look at him over the fence ez he darted off. And right there they found his rifle where he'd dropped it before he whirl't and run—fool thing fur him to do—and I seen his tracks myself, in the soft ground, goin' and comin', and where he must 'a' stood when he fired. I seen 'em by lantern light after I got there—and fully half a dozen others did, too. There's a long red streak on her arm where he must 'a' been whuppin' her durin' the day."

"Hangin's a sight too good! Did they catch him?"

"No, but they will. Some thinks he's made fur the slashes and hid out there—his tracks led off that way. There'll be a line of men throwed all the way round Little Cypress before sun-up. They're organizin' the posse at the Morner place."

"Sheriff got there yet?"

"No, but he's due by daylight or sooner. They telephoned in from Gallup's Mills to him and he's already started fur here with his pack of dogs. The trail ought to lay good, ground bein' damp the way it is. Ole Snake Doctor he's

carryin' on and ravin' round, sayin' the Lord's goin' to strike the murderer down in his tracks. But I'm puttin' my main dependence on them bloodhounds—on them first, and then mebbe on a good stout plough line and the limb of a tree. Oh, they'll ketch him, and when they do I 'low to be there! I'm jes' puttin' out fur my place to roust out my oldest boy and fetch him back with me. There's a good size crowd already."

"Don't let me hold you up any longer, then," said the pedestrian, a deadly grimness in his tone. "I'm ready now—got a pistol here in my hip pocket. That poor thing! She always was a good-hearted, hard-workin' woman and mightily put upon. As for Jafe Morner—well, if I should be so lucky as to be the one to jump him out of the sticks, I'm goin' to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. I'll be waitin' there at Morner's, Davis."

He broke into a half run.

In the patchy moonlight which sifted through the shredding rain clouds Snake Doctor's house made a black square against the lesser blackness of its background. To it, panting in his haste, came the assassin, running. He feared the place—to the bottom of his desperate soul he feared it—but a fear yet greater was driving him hither. Previously it has been stated that this man had a powerful imagination. To a literate person it might have been a gift. To him, in this emergency, it was a curse. It set his sore and smitten nerves on end; still, it honed his wits to a sharper edge.

What he overheard back there on the dirt road had remodelled his formless flight into a shaped intent. Now he had to deal, not with phantoms and haunting apparitions, but with tangible dangers; dangers not less frightful than those others perhaps, but to be coped with and—if his luck held—outwitted by physical devices. There was no remorse in him. After all, he fairly well was suited by the outcome of his mistake; getting safely away was what concerned him. In his present plight, weaponless, without a cent in his pocket, with the countryside rousing to hunt him, escape was out of prospect. But with money to buy his way along he'd have a good chance. Let the sheriff come on with his dogs, then, let the mob form, with their talk of a rope and cold lead. With any sort of break he'd best them. He would strike through the deep timber for the river; in six hours of steady

travelling he could make it. At the river he would hire a shanty-boater to ferry him across to the Arkansas side; in some town over there buy clothes and get his hair cut; then catch a train and travel as far west or as far south as the steam-cars would take him. And it was Snake Doctor's cash that would buy the way for him! He had little time, though.

Mighty little. He knew the interior arrangements of Snake Doctor's one room—the pallet in this corner, the fireplace in that, the chair and table drawn out on the sagging floor. In the one spying visit he ever had paid Snake Doctor two weeks before, when this shooting scheme first formed in his mind, he had noted these things in detail. He had marked also the very spot where he felt certain the place of concealment for the money was. All through his stay Snake Doctor, tremulous and plainly apprehensive, had manœuvred to keep between the unbidden, unwelcome caller and the corner where his comforters and blankets were placed. Also, the recluse's eyes had helped to betray him; time and time again they had turned nervously to the wall just beyond and above the bedding, a point, say, five or six feet above it. Just about there, probably in a concealed gap between or behind the logs, the loot surely must be.

He thrust through the planked door, sagging on its leather hinges, and crossed directly to the fireplace. There was no fire in it, but, stooping and fumbling with his hands he found chips there ready to be kindled, and under the chips scraps of paper—good! He needed a light of sorts to search by. He had matches in his pocket, corked in a bottle, water-tight. He got them out as quickly as his shaking fingers would let him. There were only four of them. One after another he struck them. But the paper was damp from rain coming down the mud chimney, and no fire caught until the fourth and last match had been struck. Then it merely flickered; it ran slowly along the edge of the charring paper, threatening to go out.

All right, then, let it go out if it wanted to. He could see in the dark as well as the next one, and had hands to feel with. He made for the corner diagonally across the cabin and ran his hands swiftly along the exposed upper surface of a certain log, probing for any deep depressions in the rotted bark adhering to it, nicking the dried clay mortar with his nails.

He tried that log without result, started on the log above it—and sucked in his breath as loose scraps of bark fell away at his touch from where they covered a niche in the joining. The cavity thus exposed was roughly circular in shape, the diameter, about, of a man's arm; he could tell that by fingering its edges. This must be the hole. Greedily he thrust his right hand in. It touched something—something slick and firm and smooth—and there came a quick darting sting as pointed things, sharp and keen, jabbed his thumb, tearing the skin as he jerked his hand out.

In that same breath the feeble flame in the fireplace caught well and flared up, its blaze filling the cabin with a wavery, unreliable radiance. Japhet Morner, flinging his hand up before his face, saw by that red brightness that on the inner side of his thumb were two tiny torn punctures, half an inch apart, from which drops of blood had started; and then, on beyond, two feet away, at the level of his stricken eyes he saw the forepart of a thick snake, its hideous dull-marked head lifted and thrust back just within the round of the orifice, its mouth wide open, with the cottony linings revealed, its neck taut and curved as though ready to strike again.

He gave a strangled, slobbering howl and leaped to the other side of the room, sobbing, grasping, uttering fragments of formless sound. The blood pumped and spurted from his flirted thumb to prove the wounds though minute were deep.

He must have whiskey to drink or the cloven, hot carcass of a freshly killed chicken to bind fast to the bite, or he was done for. At his house half a mile away was whiskey and there chickens were asleep on their roost. He might make it. He whirled about, then recoiled as though a hard blow had stopped him. He couldn't go where men were assembling, ready and anxious to stretch his neck for him.

Now then, his brain told him that, already and thus soon, quick pangs were leaping down his thumb, through his hand, flaming along his wrist and up his arm. The poison must be racing in his veins, mounting and growing, as he had heard it would. He had a feeling that his hand was swelling, making the skin tighter and tighter. There was no help, and even did help come now it would come too late. He howled and dropped and rolled on the floor.

Up in the creviced wall the forward length of the snake

showed, its head still guardingly reared on its slim neck, its lidless pale eyes, like twin bits of blurred glazing, aglow in the shifting firelight.

He got upon his feet, and a terrific pain struck at his heart, squeezing and wringing it. His throat closed and he choked. A second pain twisted his heart.

With a drunken leap he cleared the sill of the rear doorway, ran in a wavering course a few strides out across the horse lot and then, as his knees gave way under him, he pitched forward on his face, his lolled mouth full of weeds and muddy grass stems. The cramping fingers of his outstretched right hand almost touched a reddish black smear where the earth was trampled and the grass flattened down.

"Good reddance, by gravy! I'd call it that; wouldn't you, doc?"

The speaker was driving Doctor Bradshaw back to his home near Gallup's Mills. The other raised his head wearily. He had been up all night and he was an old man.

"Well," he said, "I'd not have wished the death he died on any man, no matter what he'd done to deserve it. Yet I reckon there was a sort of rough justice in it, too. Anyway, we've been saved a lynching or else a regular hanging. And one would have been a scandal on the county and the other an expense to the taxpayers. Maybe you have got the right idea about it, Jim Meloan.

"I'm looking at it more from the professional point of view. I've had two strange experiences this past night, Jim. I've seen an under-nourished, sickly woman, after being shot through the brain, linger for nearly seven hours before dying, and I've examined the body of a man who'd been killed by a snake bite—killed good and quick, too, judging by the evidences."

"Well, doc, ain't that the way a cotton-mouth always does kill a man—sudden like? I've always heard tell——"

"Never mind what you've heard," said the old doctor; he was cross because he was sleepy. "I'm going by the facts, not by fairy tales. I was born and raised down here, and I've been practising medicine in this county for going on forty-six years. And I tell you that in all my life I've never known of but two or three people actually being bitten by water

moccasins, and until this morning early I never had personal knowledge of anybody at all dying from the bite of any kind of snake. Horses?—well, yes. Dogs?—maybe so. But not a human being.

"Still, the proof is clear enough in this case. I think I'll write a paper about it for the next meeting of the State Medical Society. The places were the fangs nipped him were right there in the ball of his thumb—two bloody deep little scratches, side by side. And then there was that look on his face—*ugh!* I'm fairly hardened, but I'm not going to forget Jafe Morner's face in a hurry. He died quick, I'd say offhand, but he died hard, too; I'll swear to that part of it. Well, he was the kind who likely would flicker out pretty brisk under certain circumstances. Ever notice the colour of his skin and those heavy pouches under his eyes? Bad whiskey and bad food and swamp fevers didn't put those signs on him. The late Japhet had a rotten bad heart, Jimmy."

"He shorely did," agreed Meloan, fervently. "Yistiddy proved that."

"I don't mean exactly in that sense," explained the physician. "I mean there was an organic weakness. Curious thing, though, there was no swelling round the wounds nor any swelling in his hand or arm; no noticeable blotching of the skin, either. And yet, if there's anything in the accepted theories of the toxic effects of a venomous snake's bite, those conditions should have been marked. Oh, I'll have quite a paper to read before the Society!"

"Mebbe the swellin' had done went down before you got to him," suggested the morbidly interested farmer.

"No, he couldn't have been dead more than a short while when they went down there to set the dogs on the trail and found him; Sheriff Gill tells me he was still warm. And I was there not ten minutes after that. It's a mighty unusual case—several features about it that puzzle me. F'rinstance now, what about the snake that gashed him? Which-a-way did it come from beforehand and where did it head for afterwards? I didn't see any snake tracks in the ground close to where he was laying—I looked for 'em, too. Still, the horse lot was pretty well trompled. Now, that poor forlorn old creature that you people in this neighborhood call Snake Doctor, he's got his own pet theory about it. He keeps on

saying it was the vengeance of the Lord falling upon a red-handed murderer. He thinks the fellow was drawn back to the seat of his crime—well, that might be so; I've heard of such things before—and that the Divine Wrath lit on him. But if I was him I'd be poking under the stable or the cabin for a whopping big snake.

"He tells me, though—and he ought to be an authority on the subject if anybody is—he tells me that a water moccasin never travels many yards away from the water and that nighttimes they always den up somewhere, being cold-blooded creatures that love the sunshine. And on top of that he swears to me that there never have been any moccasins close about his diggin's unless he'd brought 'em there dead or else as prisoners in a sack."

"Why, looky here, doc," broke in Meloan, "he lied to you, then. There's always been a sayin' round here that Snake Doctor kept a huge big cotton-mouth right with him in his house all the time!"

"Yes, that's true. I saw it myself, not an hour ago," said the doctor, smiling a little. "I reckon the old fellow's smarter than folks give him credit for being. He took me in his shack and showed it to me."

"But I thought you jes' now said——"

"Wait till I finish. He took me in and showed it to me, just as I'm telling you. But it was deader than Hector. It was a stuffed snake—with glass eyes and all. It seems a professional taxidermist who was up here from Memphis some years ago mounted it for our eccentric friend. Well, I'll tell the world he made a good job of it. Lifelike?—you bet you! See it in a poor light and you'd almost be ready to swear you saw it move its head. I wouldn't have the thing round me for any amount of money. But it seems this old fellow had a purpose in keeping it.

"That point came out in a sort of a peculiar way, too. It's been common gossip, I understand, that Snake Doctor had a store of money laid by. No doubt you've heard exaggerated stories about the size of his wad; but I'm prepared to tell you it wasn't much—just under a hundred dollars, all told. After he'd calmed down he told me he didn't crave to keep it any more. He said he wanted it spent, paying for a proper funeral for that poor woman—said she was the only friend

he'd had in the world; the only one that ever gave him a kind look or a kind word. So he asked me and Tip Bailey to take charge of it and then he took me in his shanty and got it out from the secret place where he'd kept it hid. It was tucked down in behind a break in the chinking between two of the side logs. And—listen to this, Jim—right in front of it, just back inside the mouth of the opening, he'd set that stuffed cotton-mouth of his, figuring that the bare sight of it, with its neck all bent like as if it was fixing to lunge, and its jaws wide open, would kind of discourage anybody who might take a notion to start exploring in there.

"And then, for a further precaution—oh, he's plenty smart in his way!—he'd gone and lined the inside of the hole all round the edges and halfway down to the bottom with coils of barbed wire, with the points sticking up every which-a-way. Anybody who rammed his hand in there suddenly would certainly get gaffed. Not that anybody would who'd seen the snake first."

The old doctor yawned heavily. "Purty cute little notion, I'd call it."

INNOCENCE

By ROSE WILDER LANE

From *Harper's*

WHEN Mary Alice came quite awake her mother was rubbing her face with a cold, wet cloth. They were in the little room at the end of the car; the floor was shaking like the skin of a horse that tries to get rid of a fly, and underneath the floor the wheels were talking. Clickety-clack! they said, Clickety-clack!

"Wake up, baby," Mother said. "We'll be there in a few minutes." She turned Mary Alice around and began buttoning up. A little light ran along the edge of the shining washbasin; when Mary Alice turned her head the little light ran away very quickly, when she turned her head the other way it stopped suddenly and ran back.

"Stand still, dear!" Mother said. The best, beautiful pink dress came jerkily down over Mary Alice's head and was buttoned. Then Mother turned her around again and pushed into place the thin, curved red comb that held her hair tight. Mother's eyes were clear, like water, and full of happiness. Her two hands gave Mary Alice's face an excited little squeeze.

"We're going to see Father and Uncle Charley again. Aren't you glad?" she said.

"Will there be pickaninnies?" Mary Alice asked, anxiously. Pickaninnies were children as black as coal; Mother had promised that she would see them in Florida. Mother said yes, there would be pickaninnies.

Mary Alice sat on the chair while Mother dressed. When she sat on the edge of the chair her legs disappeared; when she pulled herself back two feet popped up in front of her. That was because her legs bent; her legs had hinges in them,

like doors. Mother's hair was very long, and no one could see at once all the lights that scampered through it. Mother's hands were going so fast that they were out of breath, and fluttered. When they came to a snarl they jerked at it, but Mother never cried. Her face in the glass smiled at Mary Alice.

"You remember Uncle Charley, don't you?" she said.

Mary Alice remembered Uncle Charley. When they lived at Grandfather's he used to put her high on the big backs of the horses at the watering trough. She remembered his legs, going into the pile of hay in the car that had taken Father and him down south to Florida. First his arms and head went in, and then one leg and then the other, and that was the last of Uncle Charley. Then there was nothing but hay. She must not tell any one that Uncle Charley was in the hay, because they were poor, and if people knew that Uncle Charley was going to Florida with Father and the horses and the cow they would not let him go. For a long time Mary Alice had not spoken of Uncle Charley, but she remembered him. He was big and strong and always laughing.

When the train stopped they got down the high car steps and were alone in a gray light. Mother looked anxiously this way and that, and her hand hurt Mary Alice's. Then she dropped it, and Father was there. "Hello! Here you are!" he said. He and Mother looked at each other, and it was as though they were together in a warm little space. Mary Alice was outside, chilly and uncomfortable. She tugged at Mother's sleeve and said, "Where are the pickaninnies?" Then they laughed and took her into the warmth.

"Didn't Charley come?" said Mother, and Father swung Mary Alice into the air and kissed her. His face was suddenly close and big, a brown, prickly face with deep creases in the cheeks.

The horses and wagon waited by the platform. Mary Alice was swung high over the wheel into the seat, Father and Mother climbed up beside her, and Father clucked to the horses. The horses walked quickly, jerking their heads, and little plops of white dust rose from their feet. They passed a store and some low, unpainted houses with wide porches. Strange trees grew in the yards. Their branches grew as though they meant something strange and frightening; their

leaves were like flat green hands with wide fingers, and their fruit was black. In one of these trees was a black boy. He sat on a branch and dangled black legs and with one hand he picked a black fruit. His large mouth was very full of white teeth, and he bit the black fruit with them; he bit it through, and laughed. Mary Alice could not look away from him; her head turned slowly and her eyes stayed fixed on him for a long time.

"Here we are, in the piney woods!" said Father. The white road went curving between straight, tall gray trees that had no branches. Far overhead their green-black tops whispered breathlessly, without stopping, telling something terrifying. The gray trunks stood still in a gray light; they knew, but they were silent, and the pale ground looked up at them. A smell of dampness and of wet paint-brushes was in the air.

Father's cheerful voice sounded loud and false. Mother's voice was low and unrelenting, as though she were talking about telling lies. Uncle Charley was her little brother.

"You must tell me what it is," she said.

Mary Alice watched the horses' ears. They turned this way and that, and reminded Mary Alice of birds sitting on a fence.

Suddenly Mother cried out, as though someone had struck her. Mary Alice looked up quickly. Mother's face was broken. Mother was crying, and nothing was safe. Terror and strangeness reached out of the gray woods and seized Mary Alice, and she shrieked, and there was nothing anywhere but sobbing and screams. Father was talking to her, but she could not hear him; and he was holding her, but she could not feel that he was near. Then he was putting something into her hand and telling her to taste it. It was sweet and salty. Sugar cane, he said; she was to suck it. It was smooth and green and round, like a large stick of candy. The wagon was still jolting on, and she sat tasting the sugar cane through her sobs until she fell asleep. She fell asleep feeling a blackness of something that had got Uncle Charley and made Mother cry.

But when she woke there he was. His big hands were holding her in the air, and he was laughing up at her. His face was red-brown and his eyes were very blue, and beneath

the edge of his blue shirt was the strip of pinky-white skin; he had just come in from the fields and was putting her up on the big horse. No, there was the wagon and a strange, zig-zag fence and many large, fresh chips scattered around a new house in the piney woods. She was in Florida, and Uncle Charley was here, too, and safe.

"Oh!" she cried, hugging his neck tight. "Mother cried about you, and I was afraid!"

The last sob came unexpectedly out of her throat, and then she felt a queer stillness. She slid to the ground. There was a strange woman, a black-haired, black-eyed, red-cheeked woman in a beautiful, bright-red dress. She was fascinating, like Grandfather's big brown horse that lived behind bars and had once killed a man.

"This is your new Aunt Molly, Mary Alice," said Mother. Mother's face was smiling, but Mother was not smiling. Mary Alice took tight hold of Mother's brown skirt and held out a hand.

"How do you do, Aunt Molly?" she said, carefully.

"The other hand, dear," said Mother.

Mary Alice saw Aunt Molly's bare feet, bare and brown and dusty with white dust. She looked up the beautiful red skirt to Aunt Molly's hands that were on Aunt Molly's hips, and on up to the bright-coloured face. The face tipped back, a thick white throat came up out of the red collar, and suddenly Aunt Molly laughed a short, queer laugh.

"Well, nyow," she said, "I'm right proud to meet you," and she shook Mary Alice's hand as though she were making fun. But it was the right hand. Aunt Molly's red lips curled and showed her white teeth; she was like the big brown horse laying back his ears, and Mary Alice backed quickly against Mother. Everything was wrong and she did not know why; she only wanted to get away, and, turning, she hid her face against Mother and shut her eyes.

Then they were all going into the house. The house was made of new yellow boards and smelled good. There was a room with a cook stove and table, and a room with the big bed and Mary Alice's cot. It was a nice house, only Uncle Charley did not live with them any more. He lived in another house with Aunt Molly. Aunt Molly took him away, and at the gate he stopped to look back at Mother.

Mother and Mary Alice stood in the doorway and waved good-bye to Uncle Charley, but Aunt Molly did not look back. She walked fast down the road, and her red skirt switched behind her like a tail.

Mother was very busy and did not say a word. She unpacked the trunk and put on her blue apron and let down the long braid of her hair that stayed in a knot only when she was playing grown-up. For Mother was not really grown-up, like Father; she liked to sing and dress dolls and play games with toes. Only to-day she did not feel like playing. She bathed Mary Alice sternly in the tin washbasin, and swept, and got supper. Her forehead was pulled into little lumps, and her mouth was queer and tight. When Father came in from doing the chores she dished up the potatoes and cut the johnnycake and set Mary Alice on the Bible in the chair without saying anything until Father put his arms around her, and then she cuddled her head beside his chin and cried again.

"Oh, how could he? How could he?" she said.

"He didn't do it," said Father, bitterly. "He's a Northerner, and she wanted him. She got around him somehow. They say she drugged him."

Mary Alice sat amazed, holding her knife straight up in her fist. "Drugged," she said to herself. "Dragged. I drug; I dragged. She dragged herself around him. She drugged herself around him." It made a song in her mind and she began to sing it, pounding on the table with the handle of the knife until Mother startled her with a sharp, "Stop it, Mary Alice!"

Mary Alice went to sleep every night hearing the piney woods whispering together, and when she woke in her cot they were still whispering. The piney woods had no leaves, only long things like red and brown darning needles. She must not go far from the house—there were snakes in the piney woods. She might go with Mother to bring water from the spring. The water came out in the ground and made a little pool that twisted in the middle, then it ran stealthily away into shadows. The air was thick and mouldy with smells, and by the water grew a fascinating, horrible plant that ate flies.

Uncle Charley came every day to help Father dig a well

outside the kitchen door. He was busy and did not feel like playing. He dug himself down to the waist and then down to the shoulders, and then he went down into the ground in a bucket on a rope. He sent up the bucket full of red mud, and Father dumped it. Mary Alice played with the mud and made things; she set them in a row in the sun and they turned to rock. Mother said she was making mud pies, but they were not pies, they were just shapes she thought of. At noon Uncle Charley came out of the ground and washed and ate dinner. He said it was like old times to eat honest-to-gosh cooking again, and Mother looked sad. Uncle Charley should not say honest-to-gosh; it was a bad word.

"Will you stay to supper, Charley?" Mother said.

Uncle Charley made marks with his toe in the red mud. "Hang it all! yes," he said.

After supper he sat with Father on the doorstep and Mother sat near them in the rocking-chair and sang songs to them; they forgot it was bedtime. Aunt Molly came up the road in the moonlight, her face and her arms and her feet were white in the moonlight, and she stood at the edge of the piney woods and called:

"Charley!"

Mother asked her to come in, but she said, "No, thanks; I reckon we-all 'll be gitting along home."

Uncle Charley did not come any more to dig, and Father and Mother talked about it. Mother said they must be nice to Aunt Molly. She did not want to, but she pinned up her hair and put on her sunbonnet and she and Mary Alice went up the white road. Sunshine slanted through the piney woods and struck the white road. Lizards lay on the zigzag fence waggling their sleek throats, and ants went across the road in crawling lines, little red lines and big black lines. White dust was on the toes of Mary Alice's little shoes and Mother's big shoes.

They came to Uncle Charley's house. It was made of logs, and skins were spread out on the walls. The ground around it was bare and hard and hens were walking about. Large bony dogs with flapping ears stood up and growled, but Aunt Molly came to the door and said:

"Hesh up, you ornery dawgs! I'm right proud to see you-all," she said, looking at Mother's calico dress. "We-all ain't

fine like Northerners, but sech as we got is good enough for we-uns. Light 'n' come in."

Mother laughed as though she had been running; she said polite things while they went into the house. It was logs on the inside, too, and bits of daylight came through between them. Women and many children were sitting around the fireplace. They were all barefooted and wore queer gray dresses, and they all looked at Mother's dress and at Mary Alice's shoes. A woman put out a long skinny arm and pulled Mary Alice close to her. The woman's face was all deep-brown wrinkles and her chewing mouth was somehow like a frog jumping.

"Nyow here's a right peart little girl," she said. "I'd give a pretty for a little girl like you."

Mary Alice shyly said nothing, leaning against the woman's friendly knee.

Aunt Molly sat on her heels by the fireplace, mixing cornmeal and water with her fingers. She took handfuls of it and patted them flat between her hands; she made a print of her hands on each side. Mary Alice admired it very much. Then Aunt Molly laid the yellow cake in the ashes and covered it with ashes and made another.

Each woman had only one or two long yellow teeth, but they never stopped brushing them. They dipped little sticks into boxes of brown dust, and chewed, and spit into the fireplace. Mary Alice had never seen any one spit so far and so well. There was a box on the knee beside her, and she looked into it, politely. The woman understood; she dipped her stick into the box and twirled it until it was brown, and offered it to Mary Alice. Mary Alice took it eagerly, but Mother's eyes opened wide, and then she shook her head.

"She's too little yet, I'm afraid," Mother said, and her blue eyes were very blue in her pink face. "Thank the lady nicely, and put it back, Mary Alice," and Mother looked around at the faces timidly.

"My childern's dipped snuff sence they was weanlings," said the woman.

Mary Alice wanted to cry, but she let the woman take back the stick. Aunt Molly stood up, and made again that frightening sound like a laugh. Mary Alice felt queer, as though she were big and Mother little and something wanted

to hurt Mother; she went and stood with her back against Mother.

The men came tramping in. They were Aunt Molly's brothers—tall, loud men, even bigger than Uncle Charley. They hung their guns on the wall and were noisy; they slapped their big hands on Aunt Molly's shoulders, and she laughed. Aunt Molly's black eyes seemed hot, her black hair was alive. It did not hang limp like the other women's but each lock of it curled and twisted into the air. She did not look at Uncle Charley, and he did not speak to Mother. All the women sat by the fire while the men ate, and Aunt Molly went back and forth with dishes. When her feet touched the floor they seemed to bound. The corn cakes smelled good and Mary Alice was hungry, but she was afraid of the big men, and even Mother seemed strange.

Uncle Charley was the last of the men to go. He stood in the doorway turning his hat in his fingers and not looking at anybody. Then he went away, and all the women got up and began putting the children on the benches by the table and finding places themselves. Someone filled Mary Alice's tin dish with grease and meat and corn cake; there was a confusing noise of voices and tin cups rattling, a woman slapped a boy and he howled, and suddenly Mary Alice cried:

"I don't want nasty black things to eat with! Why aren't they white, Mother, like ours?"

Everybody looked at her, and Mother reached down and took her under one arm and carried her out of the house; Mary Alice did not know why. Mother did not listen to anything she said; Mother set her down hard and held her head under one arm and lifted up her skirts and struck her from behind. Mary Alice yelled with amazement and terror. Mother struck her more than once, and then said:

"Now come in this house, and eat, and don't let me hear another word out of you!"

Mary Alice sat bowed on the bench and swallowed as much as she could. She was most miserable. Afterward they went home, and all down the white road Mary Alice did not say anything, only she looked up at Mother now and then and felt confused. When they got home she hurried into the house and sat alone in a corner, holding her rag doll.

The days were forlorn. Uncle Charley did not come, Father

did not laugh, and Mother never tickled toes any more when she pulled the covers off the cot in the mornings. Father had finished the well; there was no more red clay, and in the yard there were only lizards and ants to watch.

One night Mary Alice had a dream. She dreamed that someone came tapping at the door in the night. Father said, "Who's there?" and Uncle Charley's voice answered, very low. Father got up and lighted the lamp in the kitchen and Mother got up. Mary Alice thought she sat up in bed and looked through the door into the kitchen.

Mother's long braid hung down her wrapper, and Mother said to Father: "No! I won't do it, Howard. Everything we own in the world is in this farm. You won't be driven off it while I have anything to say about it."

Father's wrinkles were deep black marks on his face above the lamp. He said, "Well, but Mary——"

"I don't believe it, anyway!" Mother said. "She couldn't hate us like that. What have we ever done to her?"

Uncle Charley's voice was there, but Mary Alice could not see Uncle Charley. Mother turned quickly and spoke toward the voice.

"Well, why don't you?" she said. "You don't belong with such people. You used to be the finest boy in Webster County, and what's she doing to you? You know it isn't true; you know I've never said a word to turn you against her, but I say it now. Yes, leave her! Married or not married, there's some things wrong in the sight of God. If you'll come with us, Charley, we'll go. We'll go back home."

Then Mary Alice heard the piney woods whispering, and she was frightened and cold and wanted to call to Mother, but did not dare.

Uncle Charley said, "It's too late, Mary."

Mother said: "It isn't too late. Yes, I say it. I don't care if you'd married her twenty times——"

Then Uncle Charley said a strange thing. He said: "Mary, you don't know—you don't know what she'd do. The moon's shining." Mother's face went all still and hard in the lamplight. Then she was out of sight, and Mary Alice heard her crying voice, "Oh, Charley, don't! don't!" and a terrible, hoarse, gasping sound. Father coughed, and then he grew very large and very small and the terrible sounds went on

and on, until Mary Alice opened her eyes. The sounds were only the whispering of the piney woods and Mother was combing her hair in the morning.

"Where is Uncle Charley?" said Mary Alice. "Mother, is the moon shining?"

"What do you mean?" Mother exclaimed. "You've been dreaming, Mary Alice. Nobody's been here. Moonshining is a bad word. You must never say it again." Mary Alice's bewilderment opened her mouth, but Mother was so stern that she closed it again.

After breakfast Mother took Mary Alice between her knees and spoke to her seriously. "I want you to listen to me, Mary Alice," she said. "You must never eat anything that any one gives you. Never eat anything until I give it to you, or Father. Do you understand?"

"Oh, Mother," said Mary Alice, "aren't you ever going to tickle my toes again, ever, ever, any more?"

Mother scrunched her up tight in her warm, clean-smelling calico lap and arms, laughing and catching her breath. But in a minute she was stern again. "Listen, dear. You must never, never eat anything until I say you may. Do you understand? Tell me, Mary Alice."

"I must never eat anything until you say I may," said Mary Alice, remembering hard. And next morning Mother tickled her toes, but it was not as it used to be, and Mary Alice did not want Mother to do it because she was asked.

One could play in the garden, putting the peanut blossoms to bed. Mary Alice had carefully picked up the peanut blossoms and dusted them, until Father found her doing it. He laughed then, and called Mother to laugh, too. Peanut blossoms must dig down into the ground to make peanuts. So now she put them in little holes and buried them—the peanut blossoms were glad because she was helping them.

"Well, I guess we'll have to live on the peanuts," Father said. The cow was dead. He had found her in the piney woods with her legs cut, so he had had to kill her, and there would not be any little calf. Mother looked sick. She said: "How can human beings do such things! But I won't back down for them," she said; "it's like going away and leaving Charley."

There were no more peanut blossoms. Under the ground

there were peanuts, and Father was digging them up; some day Mother would roast them. The banana plant in the yard had grown taller than Mary Alice; its broad leaves hung limp and warm in the sun. Beneath it on the ground a moth fluttered; it was alive, but it was covered with ants. The ants were eating it. Mary Alice got a grass stem and fought them. She poked them off as fast as she could, but they kept coming, and the poor moth fluttered. She must not touch moths, a touch brushed the weeny little feathers off their wings, and hurt them. Mary Alice fought the ants as fast as she could, but in a moment the moth jerked, twisted up its legs, and died. Mary Alice stood up. Aunt Molly was leaning on the fence, watching her from the shadows of a sunbonnet. She did not speak, but beckoned with her hand.

"See what I've fetched you, honey," she said, like a secret. She uncurled her fingers, and on her palm was a little red ball. "It's spruce gum," she said. "It grows in the piney woods. Your Aunt Molly's fetched it and chawed it all soft for you."

She felt warm and grateful toward Aunt Molly. But Aunt Molly's eyes were strange; their look came out of them and pushed Mary Alice's gaze down. She could not look at Aunt Molly. She turned the red ball over in her hand.

"Chaw it," said Aunt Molly. "Chaw it."

It was only to chaw; it was not something to eat. Mary Alice lifted it to her mouth, and then took it down and looked at it again. But it was not to eat. The screen door slammed and she looked up guiltily.

"Mother, see!" she said. "See what Aunt Molly gave me! Mother, can I eat it? It's gum."

Mother looked at Aunt Molly. Aunt Molly stood up straight, and the sunbonnet fell back; her face came out hard and bright, and she smiled at Mother.

"Yes, Mary Alice, you may have it," said Mother, and just as joy leaped in Mary Alice, Mother's hand came down quickly and took the red ball. "After supper," she said.

Mary Alice looked up, protesting, and was struck silent. Something vast and terrible was there, in the air, invisible, coming out of the eyes of Aunt Molly and Mother. Mary Alice's legs stumbled as Mother led her by the hand into the house.

Mother sat down and took Mary Alice into her lap. She rocked her for a while and then said:

"Mary Alice, I promised you the gum, and Mother always keeps her promises. The gum is yours. Will you give it to me for a pan of peanuts?"

Mary Alice thought. She thought of the red ball, how good it looked, and she thought of hot, crackling peanuts.

"A large pan?" she asked.

"The black baking pan," said Mother.

"All right," said Mary Alice. Mother got the black baking pan and filled it with peanuts. She put the pan in the oven and shut the oven door. Then she went out. Mary Alice sat on a stool and waited. She looked at the sunshine on the floor and at the ironing board laid on the backs of the two chairs; she heard the piney woods whispering, and the safe sound of the teakettle. Now and then she sniffed. She smelled the peanuts. She smelled them very loud. She began to smell them anxiously; they smelled burning. She was trying to open the oven door when suddenly someone seized her. Mother had her tight; Mother was shaking and sobbing and laughing, her face was wet and twisted against Mary Alice's. Mary Alice shrieked aloud and struggled, screaming.

Father came in, running, the hoe in his hand. Mother cried: "She died! She's dead!" and laughed horribly.

Father shook them both. "O my God! O my God! What is it?" he said. "Answer me!"

Mother stumbled across the floor, carrying Mary Alice to the doorway. Outside, on the stain of red mud, the Plymouth Rock hen lay dead with her head on.

"I threw it to her, and she swallowed it, and died," said Mother.

And Mary Alice sincerely wept, because she had liked the hen, too. Father and Mother comforted her, and talked over her head.

There was no supper that night. Mary Alice was given a piece of bread and butter, and she was not to be put to bed. Father had hitched up the horses, and they were going back to Grandfather's. Trunks and boxes were packed and piled in the wagon, with the stove and table and chairs and the sacks of peanuts. As soon as it was dark they started.

The piney woods were shadowy in the moonlight and things without shapes moved through them; the horses' feet made dull, thudding sounds and the wagon creaked, the harness jingled. They had gone a long way, but Mary Alice was still awake when the horses shied and someone was holding on to the wheel and looking upward.

"Good-bye!" Uncle Charley panted. "I just made it in time across the hill way. I thought I'd get there and fight 'em with you. But it's better for you this way. Don't stop. Keep going. They'll be at the house in half an hour. Good-bye."

Mother leaned down to him. "Get in and come with us," she said. "Oh, Charley, how'll I ever stand it? We'll get you off, somehow, Charley. I can't go away and leave you here."

The piney woods were still, listening.

"God! Mary, I can't," Uncle Charley said. "You don't know her. She's got me. She'd have the revenuers after me to-morrow. I—I ain't got the nerve any more. You better hurry on. Good-bye. I—— Good-bye, Mary!"

Then he was gone, and Father put his arm around Mother and clucked to the horses. Mary Alice thought at first that Mother was crying, but she was not; she was quite still.

"Aren't we going to see Uncle Charley again?" Mary Alice asked.

"Hush, Mary Alice!" said Father.

The piney woods were filled with strangeness; the gray, straight trunks moved stealthily, and the road was a glimmer that went out in darkness ahead. But Mary Alice slipped away from all vague wonderings into the coziness of sleep.

GOLD-MOUNTED GUNS

By F. R. BUCKLEY

From *Red Book*

EVENING had fallen on Longhorn City, and already, to the south, an eager star was twinkling in the velvet sky, when a spare, hard-faced man slouched down the main street and selected a pony from the dozen hitched beside Tim Geogehan's general store. The town, which in the daytime suffered from an excess of eye-searing light in its open spaces, confined its efforts at artificial lighting to the one store, the one saloon, and its neighbour, the Temple of Chance; so it was from a dusky void that the hard-faced man heard himself called by name.

"Tommy!" a subdued voice accosted him.

The hard-faced man made, it seemed, a very slight movement—a mere flick of the hand at his low-slung belt; but it was a movement perfectly appraised by the man in the shadows.

"Wait a minute!" the voice pleaded.

A moment later, his hands upraised, his pony's bridle-reins caught in the crook of one arm, a young man moved into the zone of light that shone bravely out through Tim Geogehan's back window.

"Don't shoot," he said, trying to control his nervousness before the weapon unwaveringly trained on him. "I'm—a friend."

For perhaps fifteen seconds the newcomer and the hard-faced man examined each other with the unwinking scrutiny of those who take chances of life and death. The younger, with that lightning draw fresh in his mind, noted the sinister droop of a gray moustache over a hidden mouth, and shivered a little as his gaze met that of a pair of steel-blue

eyes. The man with the gun saw before him a rather handsome face, marred, even in this moment of submission, by a certain desperation.

"What do you want?" he asked, tersely.

"Can I put my hands down?" countered the other.

The lean man considered.

"All things bein' equal," he said, "I think I'd rather you'd first tell me how you got round to callin' me Tommy. Been askin' people in the street?"

"No," said the boy. "I only got into town this afternoon, an' I ain't a fool anyway. I seen you ride in this afternoon, and the way folks backed away from you made me wonder who you was. Then I seen them gold-mounted guns of yourn, an' of course I knew. Nobody ever had guns like them but Pecos Tommy. I could ha' shot you while you was gettin' your horse, if I'd been that way inclined."

The lean man bit his moustache.

"Put 'em down. What do you want?"

"I want to join you."

"You want to *what?*"

"Yeah, I know it sounds foolish to you, mebbe," said the young man. "But, listen—your side-kicker's in jail down in Rosewell. I figured I could take his place—anyway, till he got out. I know I ain't got any record, but I can ride, an' I can shoot the pips out of a ten-spot at ten paces, an'—I got a little job to bring into the firm, to start with."

The lean man's gaze narrowed.

"Have, eh?" he asked, softly.

"It ain't anythin' like you go in for as a rule," said the boy, apologetically, "but it's a roll of cash an'—I guess it'll show you I'm straight. I only got on to it this afternoon. Kind of providential I should meet you right now."

The lean man chewed his moustache. His eyes did not shift.

"Yeah," he said, slowly. "What you quittin' punchin' for?"

"Sick of it."

"Figurin' robbin' trains is easier money?"

"No," said the young man, "I ain't. But I like a little spice in life. They ain't none in punchin'."

"Got a girl?" asked the lean man.

The boy shook his head. The hard-faced man nodded reflectively.

"Well, what's the job?" he asked.

The light from Geogehan's window was cut off by the body of a man who, cupping his hands about his eyes, stared out into the night, as if to locate the buzz of voices at the back of the store.

"If you're goin' to take me on," said the young man, "I can tell you while we're ridin' toward it. If you ain't—why, there's no need to go no further."

The elder slipped back into its holster the gold-mounted gun he had drawn, glanced once at the obscured window and again, piercingly, at the boy whose face now showed white in the light of the rising moon. Then he turned his pony and mounted.

"Come on," he commanded.

Five minutes later the two had passed the limits of the town, heading for the low range of hills which encircled it to the south—and Will Arblaster had given the details of his job to the unemotional man at his side.

"How do you know the old guy's got the money?" came a level question.

"I saw him come out of the bank this afternoon, grinnin' all over his face an' stuffin' it into his pants-pocket," said the boy. "An' when he was gone, I kind of inquired who he was. His name's Sanderson, an' he lives in this yer cabin right ahead a mile. Looked kind of a soft old geezer—kind that'd give up without any trouble. Must ha' been quite some cash there, judgin' by the size of the roll. But I guess when *you* ask him for it, he won't mind lettin' it go."

"I ain't goin' to ask him," said the lean man. "This is your job."

The boy hesitated.

"Well, if I do it right," he asked, with a trace of tremor in his voice, "will you take me along with you sure?"

"Yeah—I'll take you along."

The two ponies rounded a shoulder of the hill: before the riders there loomed, in the moonlight, the dark shape of a cabin, its windows unlighted. The lean man chuckled.

"He's out."

Will Arblaster swung off his horse.

"Maybe," he said, "but likely the money ain't. He started off home, an' if he's had to go out again, likely he's hid the money some place. Folks know *you're* about. I'm goin' to see."

Stealthily he crept toward the house. The moon went behind a cloud-bank, and the darkness swallowed him. The lean man, sitting his horse, motionless, heard the rap of knuckles on the door—then a pause, the rattle of the latch. A moment later there came the heavy thud of a shoulder against wood—a cracking sound, and a crash as the door went down. The lean man's lips tightened. From within the cabin came the noise of one stumbling over furniture, then the fitful fire of a match illumined the windows. In the quiet, out there in the night, the man on the horse, twenty yards away, could hear the clumping of the other's boots on the rough board floor, and every rustle of the papers that he fumbled in his search. Another match scratched and sputtered, and then, with a hoarse cry of triumph, was flung down. Running feet padded across the short grass and Will Arblaster drew up, panting.

"Got it!" he gasped. "The old fool! Put it in a tea-canister right on the mantelshelf. Enough to choke a horse! Feel it!"

The lean man, unemotional as ever, reached down and took the roll of money.

"Got another match?" he asked.

Willie struck one, and panting, watched while his companion, moistening a thumb, ruffled through the bills.

"Fifty tens," said the lean man. "Five hundred dollars. Guess I'll carry it."

His cold blue eyes turned downward, and focused again with piercing attention on the younger man's upturned face. The bills were stowed in a pocket of the belt right next one of those gold-mounted guns which, earlier in the evening, had covered Willie Arblaster's heart. For a moment, the lean man's hand seemed to hesitate over its butt; then, as Willie smiled and nodded, it moved away. The match burned out.

"Let's get out of here," the younger urged; whereupon the hand which had hovered over the gun-butt grasped Will Arblaster's shoulder.

"No, not yet," he said quietly, "not just yet. Get on your hawss, an' set still awhile."

The young man mounted. "What's the idea?"

"Why!" said the level voice at his right. "This is a kind of novelty to me. Robbin' trains, you ain't got any chance to see results, like: this here's different. Figure this old guy'll be back pretty soon. I'd like to see what he does when he finds his wad's gone. Ought to be amusin'!"

Arblaster chuckled uncertainly.

"Ain't he liable to——"

"He can't see us," said the lean man with a certain new cheerfulness in his tone. "An' besides, he'll think we'd naturally be miles away; an' besides that, we're mounted, all ready."

"What's that?" whispered the young man, laying a hand on his companion's arm.

The other listened.

"Probably him," he said. "Now stay still."

There were two riders—by their voices, a man and a girl: they were laughing as they approached the rear of the house, where, roughly made of old boards, stood Pa Sanderson's substitute for a stable. They put up the horses; then their words came clearer to the ears of the listeners, as they turned the corner of the building, walking toward the front door.

"I feel mean about it, anyhow," said the girl's voice. "You going on living here, Daddy, while——"

"Tut-tut-tut!" said the old man. "What's five hundred to me? I ain't never had that much in a lump, an' shouldn't know what to do with it if I had. 'Sides, your Aunt Elviry didn't give it you for nothin'. 'If she wants to go to college,' says she, 'let her prove it by workin'. I'll pay half, but she's got to pay t'other half.' Well, you worked, an'—— Where on earth did I put that key?"

There was a silence, broken by the grunts of the old man as he contorted himself in the search of his pockets: and then the girl spoke: the tone of her voice was the more terrible for the restraint she was putting on it.

"Daddy—the—the—did you leave the money in the house?"

"Yes. What is it?" cried the old man.

"Daddy—the door's broken down, and——"

There was a hoarse cry: boot-heels stumbled across the boards, and again a match flared. Its pale light showed a girl standing in the doorway of the cabin, her hands clasped on her bosom—while beyond the wreckage of the door a bent figure with silver hair tottered away from the mantelshelf. In one hand Pa Sanderson held the flickering match, in the other a tin box.

"Gone!" he cried in his cracked voice. "Gone!"

Willie Arblaster drew a breath through his teeth and moved uneasily in his saddle. Instantly a lean, strong hand, with a grip like steel, fell on his wrist and grasped it. The man behind the hand chuckled.

"Listen!" he said.

"Daddy—Daddy—don't take on so—please don't," came the girl's voice, itself trembling with repressed tears. There was a scrape of chair-legs on the floor as she forced the old man into his seat by the fireplace. He hunched there, his face in his hands, while she struck a match and laid the flame to the wick of the lamp on the table. As it burned up she went back to her father, knelt by him, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Now, now, now!" she pleaded. "Now, Daddy, it's all right. Don't take on so. It's all right."

But he would not be comforted.

"I can't replace it!" cried Pa Sanderson, dropping trembling hands from his face. "It's gone! Two years you've been away from me; two years you've slaved in a store; and now I've——"

"Hush, hush!" the girl begged. "Now, Daddy—it's all right. I can go on working, and——"

With a convulsive effort, the old man got to his feet. "Two years more slavery, while some skunk drinks your money, gambles it—throws it away!" he cried. "Curse him! Whoever it is, curse him! Where's God's justice? What's a man goin' to believe when years of scrapin' like your aunt done, an' years of slavin' like yours in Laredo there, an' all our happiness to-day can be wiped out by a damned thief in a minute?"

The girl put her little hand over her father's mouth.

"Don't, Daddy," she choked. "It only makes it worse.

Come and lie down on your bed, and I'll make you some coffee. Don't cry, Daddy darling. Please."

Gently, like a mother with a little child, she led the heart-broken old man out of the watchers' line of vision, out of the circle of lamplight. More faintly, but still with heartrending distinctness, the listeners could hear the sounds of weeping.

The lean man sniffed, chuckled, and pulled his bridle.

"Some circus!" he said appreciatively. "C'mon, boy."

His horse moved a few paces, but Will Arblaster's did not. The lean man turned in his saddle.

"Ain't you comin'?" he asked.

For ten seconds, perhaps, the boy made no answer. Then he urged his pony forward until it stood side by side with his companion's.

"No," he said. "An'—an' I ain't goin' to take that money, neither."

"Huh?"

The voice was slow and meditative.

"Don't know as ever I figured what this game meant," he said. "Always seemed to me that all the hardships was on the stick-up man's side—gettin' shot at an' chased and so on. Kind of fun, at that. Never thought 'bout—old men cryin'."

"That ain't my fault," said the lean man.

"No," said Will Arblaster, still very slowly. "But I'm goin' to take that money back. You didn't have no trouble gettin' it, so you don't lose nothin'."

"Suppose I say I won't let go of it?" suggested the lean man with a sneer.

"Then," snarled Arblaster, "I'll blow your damned head off an' take it! Don't you move, you! I've got you covered. I'll take the money out myself."

His revolver muzzle under his companion's nose, he snapped open the pocket of the belt and extracted the roll of bills. Then, regardless of a possible shot in the back, he swung off his horse and shambled, with the mincing gait of the born horseman, into the lighted doorway of the cabin. The lean man, unemotional as ever, sat perfectly still, looking alternately at the cloud-dappled sky and at the cabin, from which now came a murmur of voices harmonizing with a strange effect of joy, to the half-heard bass of the night-wind.

It was a full ten minutes before Will Arblaster reappeared

in the doorway alone, and made, while silhouetted against the light, a quick movement of his hand across his eyes, then stumbled forward through the darkness toward his horse. Still the lean man did not move.

"I'm—sorry," said the boy as he mounted. "But——"

"I ain't," said the lean man quietly. "What do you think I made you stay an' watch for, you young fool?"

The boy made no reply. Suddenly the hair prickled on the back of his neck and his jaw fell.

"Say," he demanded hoarsely at last. "Ain't you Pecos Tommy?"

The lean man's answer was a short laugh.

"But you got his guns, an' the people in Longhorn all kind of fell back!" the boy cried. "If you ain't him, who are you?"

The moon had drifted from behind a cloud and flung a ray of light across the face of the lean man as he turned it, narrow-eyed, toward Arblaster. The pallid light picked out with terrible distinctness the grim lines of that face—emphasized the cluster of sun-wrinkles about the corners of the piercing eyes and marked as if with underscoring black lines the long sweep of the fighting jaw.

"Why," said the lean man dryly, "I'm the sheriff that killed him yesterday. Let's be ridin' back."

AS A DOG SHOULD

By CHARLES ALEXANDER

From *Collier's*

A HUGE car, silent, implacable, and shiny as a shell-backed monster, rolled out of its lair and slowed to a stop on the paved track crossing the lawn. At its appearance Umpqua, a little so-called dog, of a type and size to back into a tomato can and defy the world, leaped from a crêpe-de-chine lap and streaked across the grass. He stood beside the car and, head tipped a little sidewise, expectantly eyed the driver.

The Doctor got out, produced a carrying apparatus, and began clamping it on to the running board. As he worked he said to the dog: "Don't worry, Ump, we're not going anywhere to-day. Besides, if we were, you couldn't go."

The voices of girls called from the lawn. The summer afternoon was warm. A little breeze loafed among the roses, occasionally spilling a few petals on the ground. Alene, the younger daughter, with long white hands and sure young eyes, came and watched the Doctor, sitting with a cushion between her shoulders and the trunk of a mountain ash that served its lonely sentence beside the drive.

Ump would not be inveigled into her lap and her long hands. Perfectly still he stood, only his bright brown eyes moving as he watched the Doctor fussing about the car. Many times Ump's eyes had followed the Doctor and the shiny monster down the drive and out—upon the strange white road.

Where the road led Ump did not dream. He was incapable of dreaming its possible destination, since he never had followed it, or any road, to any destination. Nothing had he followed but the walks and paths among the lawns

and gardens that led, all of them, back upon themselves, back to the high doorways of the bulky white house. They were adventures in themselves, these paths, especially at sunrise, when the grass glistened and fat slugs threaded through it. Ump had a habit of stealthily exploring the paths each morning.

But the road was something else again. He had a habit, too, of following the shiny car, when he could escape fondling hands and laps, as far as the pillars of the gate. Here he could see the road; could see a distance along it; could see, if he stood up with one paw on the pillar, a vast sea of yellow fields, and beyond—in the infinite beyond—blue hills heaped like breastworks around the valley.

He could not even dream of these, either, since he did not know what hills were. No man's dog was Ump. He was a fondling, bred and reared to be cuddled in crêpe-de-chine laps and petted by idle white hands. Alene's sure eyes, and the Doctor's wise ones, could see no hint of the shaggy monster that stirred in him as he stood at the gate and glimpsed the hills while the great car crept out on the road, bearing the master—Ump's man-master—away. Always, when the gate closed, he slowly returned to his duties as toy and fondling.

This day the gate did not open. While Ump watched, the Doctor lugged strange cases, packages, canvas paraphernalia, out of the house and to the car. He packed and repacked them, carefully disregarding all the advice that Alene generously tendered him. Last of all was a strapped bundle of books. Alene laughed about them and told Ump how funny it was.

Then the Doctor squeezed himself into what was left of the driver's seat. The car purred a little. Ump turned toward the gate. The car moved. But it moved backward, and vanished inside the garage. In the middle of the drive Ump stood, his ears pointed, puzzling at this suspicious and unheard-of manœuvre. He had been awaiting his glimpse of the hills, but the gate had not opened. He was disappointed, and suddenly very determined. He ran from Alene, hid behind the mountain ash, and there spent the night. Nor did the magic of the night soothe him.

"Ump! Ump, you rascal. Where are you? Ump*qua*, come here."

It was early morning; the car stood outside the gate, eagerly humming, and its four passengers were impatient for the start. There were the Doctor and Alene, and his first daughter, an empty-handed wife, and Ray, her empty-headed husband. All looked back at the house and grounds. From the gate Thomas anxiously looked at them.

"Where's Ump? Have you seen Ump?" barked the Doctor.

"No, sir, but I'll look."

"Well, look later. We're going."

"Tell Ump good-bye for me, Thomas," sang Alene as the gears shifted. "Don't forget his milk. At eight and at five."

Thomas closed the gate. The car started. Ump got up from the dust as the car passed from over him. He trotted close beside it, hopped on the running board, crouched against the fender. Then they were whizzing down the white road, the out road, the Umpqua valley was sliding behind them, the Umpqua range approaching, the ancient wind singing to them its ancient song. And the Doctor raised his own voice:

Yonder the Far Horizon lies,
and there, by night and day,
The old ships sail to port again,
the young ships sail away;
And come I may, but go I must,
and if men ask you why,
You may place the blame on the
stars and the sun
And the white road, and the sky.

The Doctor did not know that Umpqua, too, braced on the running board, heard the song of the wind; heard and felt more than he or any of them heard or felt. Such strange, such subtle, things, indeed, the wind from off the mountains poured into Umpqua's ears and nose that he forgot after a while his fear of his footing on the lurching board, and unconsciously crept forward. He crawled past the fore door,

along the hood, put his feet on the lamp, and stretched forward.

He could not stretch far enough. He thrust his nose well out into the wind. It tore at him, drove into his nostrils—and he stretched farther, climbed upon the lamp itself, until half his body was ahead of the car. The wind from the mountains blew through him, blew into his blood. He was drunk on the words and music of it, its shouted knowledge and whispered secrets, that were like patches of flame swirling and eddying in the driving substance. The air was green, almost palpable, seemingly alive. Ump was like a weather vane pointed into it.

The people in the car shouted. The Doctor even swore, damning the little fyste that had stowed away on his car. Alene shrieked to Ump to come back, lest he be killed. And none of them noticed the rut until the front wheels struck it and the car plunged and lurched.

"Stop, Daddy," cried Alene.

"Stop yourself," snorted the Doctor. "Let the little devil go back home. I've taught him to stay home. He knows better than to sneak out and get on this car. We can't look out for him in the mountains. Some jackrabbit would eat him. Let him be; he'll go home."

And Ump, picking himself up from the dust, saw a rapidly vanishing car and a trail of hieroglyphics in the road that the tires had left.

Next morning, as camp was breaking in the foothills, he limped along those hieroglyphics, a little white mite crawling between two walls of giant trees. And Alene, now a slim khaki figure, ran and gathered him up.

She said nothing to the Doctor. He could not now say anything. The fyste had won his right to ride.

Ump was changed. He allowed Alene to gather him into her lap, and he was too exhausted to nibble the sandwich she saved for him. But when the car started up the dank road, into the black-forested Umpquas, he stirred. He got to the side of the seat, hung his head over, pointed it into the wind.

They stopped at a spring, and Ump, too, must drink. He declined to reënter the car. Alene pleaded. The Doctor got out and drove him around and around. He retreated under the car.

"Let the little fool walk," growled the Doctor. "He'll be nothing but a nuisance to us on the whole trip. If he gets back home alive, it will be a miracle."

When he slammed the door, Ump jumped aboard, climbed along the fender, and took up his perch on the headlight.

"He's crazy," said the Doctor. "Crazy on air."

"I don't see why a civilized dog should insist on standing out there with his nose pointed, as if he were on the trail of a cougar or something," said Alene.

The Doctor was indignant. "Civilized? Ump isn't civilized; he never was civilized; he was just sick, and now he's getting well." Which was as close to profundity as the Doctor had come in all his studious life.

Thus Ump finished the journey, while the mountains closed in like a presence, so that even the people in the car fell silent. He clung upon the lamp, his eyes wet and blinded, his nose stretched forward as far as he could stretch it. He did not shift position. He never looked aside. All his tiny being was listening, sensing, feeling those thousand ancient voices in the ancient wind. And they became more than sudden sibilant voices. They became forms and phantoms, glimpses of vague forms and shaggy phantoms that seemed, to Ump, to come streaming down the wind to him.

At noon they made permanent camp on a little flat high in the Umpquas. When Ump saw this he climbed down from the lamp. He did not run to them in play, though he was conscious in a new way of his duty to them. He was not the Ump of old. He was no longer sick. This was his own country; he was a wanderer returned to his heath. Whatever strange people lived here were his people. Yet, paradoxically, they were enemy people. He knew that, knew it without question, knew it indubitably, for the wind told him.

While the Doctor and Ray pitched the tents, Ump stealthily crawled across the glade to the great bleached snag stretched from the forest on one hand to the roaring little river on the other. It was a huge snag, six feet high as it lay, and two hundred feet long, fire-smitten out of the father forest of the present forest. Ump managed, with the aid of a leaning limb, to climb upon it. Thence he made his way toward its fortress-like butt, at the river.

Slowly, cautiously, he advanced. He was in the midst of a

thousand mighty dangers. Near him the Doctor puffed and shouted as he swung a hand axe, but Ump was silent and wide-eyed. He knew what he knew, which was what the air and the feel of it told him; he knew that this was no time for careless shouting. Along the log seas of tree fern swarmed, as high as the log's white top, so that it formed a wooden road through the surface of the fern brake. Down this road crept Ump. At the butt the roots stuck up like a wall; Ump climbed among them, stuck his nose out, looked, and listened.

The forest was still. The great firs, like aged prophets, crooned a little high above. In the river was a group of subdued voices, as though a clan of hunters, heads together, muttered over their plans. Beneath the great firs, cavern after gloomy cavern opened out. And as Ump watched he saw the Wilderness. He saw one of his own people—his enemy friends. He froze, a little white speck up among the roots, scarcely drawing breath.

It was a smooth tawny body. Only for an instant did he see it. It came out of the gloom, lightly leaped over a brown log, disappeared in the gloom. It was only a shadow of tawniness, a hint of a sinuous body. But the clean white fangs glinted in the twilight forest. And from them a limp body hung, a body that would have made many creatures the size of Ump. And Ump knew: the white fangs, the lifeless body hanging from them—these were the Wilderness. Somewhere he had known it all before—when and how he did not know.

The paunchy Doctor was industriously sharpening a peg when Ump flung upon him. The little dog seemed crazed. He danced around the man, yelped, tried to tell him of the great fanged enemy in the forest. He scrambled back on the snag, ran its length, took a long look into the gloom where the beast had appeared, and ran back.

The Doctor's fat hand swept Ump aside. "Get away," he growled. "Go lie down. Did you see a mouse?"

Ump, humiliated, slunk off, the stub of his tail trying to sneak between his legs. Alene reached to pick him up. He growled a quavery, fierce little growl that bade her mind her own affairs. He found a shoe box and crawled into it, turning about so as to fasten his eyes on the huge Doctor.

Ump was loyal. Here, in the presence of enemies, he was beginning to find his own relationship to his master. For the first time in his life he felt an overwhelming love for the master. From every hand came squalls and cries that he alone understood. The intense reality of them (to him) made him wild to rush and tell the whole thing to the Doctor.

He felt important. He and he alone understood the cries and squalls, heard the overtone of hidden life, felt the full meaning of that single picture he had seen of tawny body and white fangs. He wished to rush up to his master and tell him these important things.

Yet that was wholly ridiculous, as his one attempt showed. Back at the house in the valley Ump had had no duties and no cause to serve his master; wherefore he had no cause to love him. He had amused himself with superficial cunning, stealing a pound of butter when the refrigerator door was open, or killing a barred-rock hen occasionally and suffering a gentle beating in consequence. And he had amused the Doctor's daughters in about the same way that dolls had once amused them.

Here in the forest he suddenly discovered meaning and purpose in his own existence. It was unnamable, indefinable, but none the less real. Looking at the man, Ump knew that he loved him. He forgot that he was a pitiful little house dog, felt instead that he was Dog, man's dog, standing beside his majestic master and facing a world where fangs gleamed in the darkness and huge, vague bodies crept and leaped.

He did not sulk for long. The voices called and challenged him. Crawling across the clearing, he spent an hour venturing, a step at a time, into the forest. He came to the base of a fir, and discovered a world of trembling sensations in sneaking around it. He examined everything with his eyes; there were a thousand things to see, and each, to Ump, was crammed with baffling memories and with wisps and shreds and suggestions of memories that had never before come alive within his brain. Suddenly, from a clump of vine maple, a horrible torrent of maledictions poured on him—coarse curses, jeering screams, guttural threats. Down the tree trunk a brown body flashed, leaped to a log, stared at Ump. That was a yellow-bellied pine squirrel, and far above another squirrel purred and chirruped. The camp-robber jay that

had cursed him went off into another thicket, mockery and ridicule floating back.

Ump, eyes fastened on the round eyes of the squirrel, boiled with excitement. The shadowy, shaggy things were materializing. He stood frozen, glaring at the yellow-belly; the latter glared down from the log, jerked his body nervously, sat up and shrieked a defy at Ump. The squirrel's teeth were bowed and curved like little sabres. His blue-brown fur was mysteriously soft.

A step at a time, eyes glued on the squirrel, Ump crept over the brown moss. He came to the log. The yellow-belly stooped, barked at him, jerked right and left to startle Ump, and worked himself into a fury. And thereat Ump made his mistake.

He backed off.

Like a flash the blustering squirrel leaped, being careful to land well away from Ump. But Ump, at the leap, was suffocated with terror. He turned and ran.

Back at camp the four busy people were treated to a rare sight. Ump, a white, frightened ball, fled for the tent.

One jump behind him, coming in great, sailing bounds, was a fat yellow-belly. At every jump toward Ump's heels the yellow-belly barked his righteous indignation. At every bark Ump fled the faster. And when he shot inside the tent, burying himself in a pile of blankets, the squirrel stood up and hurled his choicest abuse at the white tent.

The Doctor roared until he was weak. He sat down and roared; then he lay in the fern and continued to roar. And finally, propped on an elbow, he called Ump forth and mercilessly kidded him:

"You're some dog, now, aren't you, Ump? A regular he-dog. By golly, you'll show these fuzzy monsters of the forest what it is to meet up with a real man's dog. But you want to be careful. This is a wild and dangerous neck o' woods. A mouse might catch you out alone and bite your ears off."

Ray and Mrs. Ray laughed. Alene comforted her pet.

"Don't you mind them, Ump. You're all right, and you and I know it, don't we? Besides, he *can* kill things. I've seen him."

"I never saw him kill anything but warm milk. What did he kill?"

"Well, it was only a beetle. But it was a big beetle, shiny and horrible. Ump boxed it with his paws. Then he bit it."

"Good for Ump," cried the Doctor. "I'll buy him a medal."

"Besides, that was an awfully big squirrel. He looked mad, too. And he had the—the drop on Ump."

"I hope to tell you!" chuckled the Doctor. "That is, he almost—and would have, if Ump hadn't broken the canine speed limit. I never saw him move like that before, even at mealtime. You're all right, Ump. Any dog that can project himself through space like that deserves a pension."

Ump looked his reproach, escaped from Alene, and hid within the tent. He had wanted to defend his master, to fill his place as a dog should. And at the first danger he had fled.

In the tent he stayed until nightfall. Then he nosed his way out at the back of the tent, and around the edge of the shadows that the fire before the tent threw into the darkness. Around the fire the campers sat on canvas stools, the Doctor with a book in his hands, Ray meditating on the trout possibilities of the river.

"I scouted down it a ways," he said. "Fine water. There's a deep place under a bluff, just below the end of that dead snag, where there are some big beauties. But you can't get 'em out of that water. It's clear as glass."

"Oh, yes, you can if you do it right," drawled the Doctor. "Sneak up on 'em and tease 'em to the top."

"You'll have to show me," said Ray. "I'm not going to waste time there. But I saw some monsters in that pool."

The Doctor smiled, and made his own plans. He read some ancient knowledge out of his book, felt very well satisfied, and led the retreat to the cots.

Yet, perhaps, the wisdom that he found in his printed pages did not compare with what Ump felt abroad in the wilderness night. He had climbed the snag again and crouched hidden among its roots, staring into the black forest. Long into the night he lay motionless, teeming inwardly with thrill after thrill.

Behind him the fern lay in billows like a silver sea. The air brought to his nose a hundred wild tales. From everywhere came voices, voice upon voice, yet strangely combining

in one continuous undertone. In the wall of the night before him were eyes—flashing green or burning red like coals, and always in pairs, always two by two. The whole night was eyes. The vast blue-black sky blinked with them. And there, too, they seemed always to blink in pairs.

Under the forest were occasional rustlings, when red eyes swirled together, and at times a squall came from afar. Somewhere arose the kittenish *meow* of a lost fawn; later the bleat and snort of a doe came, and angry snarls.

Silvery wings floated down; above Ump a wood bat had caught a hawk moth, clipping his wings off in flight. The little lapdog's blood pounded. He felt near to bursting. Here, around him, in shadowy shapes, were the living things whose calls had come to him even in the valley. He was facing them, the things he should, as a loyal dog, face for his sleeping master.

Before the tent the fire died down to embers; around Ump life in all its olden meanings held forth. He heard a scratching on the log. Far down it a lithe shape climbed over, and he saw, for an instant, glowing red coals, two by two. Aslant the high sky great wings fluttered, and a snapping of beaks came out of the air.

This was the place, on guard before his master's camp. Overwhelmed by the glory of it, Ump leaped from the snag.

It was a long leap; he landed on his nose. But he ran, tripping in the fern, until he stood in the forest. And he barked wildly, defiantly, at all the threatening death, all the life, all the shadows and red eyes and glistening fangs.

Then, his challenge unanswered, he raced into the tent, barking a summons to his master. He was no longer a fyste; he had forgotten himself and his place.

He was a dog, a proper dog, huge and shaggy, royally great as the dogs his blood had come down from had been great and loyal. He was telling his master of the enemies without, bidding him come and kill.

The Doctor saw it otherwise. He grunted himself awake, got the vociferous Ump by the neck, and punctuated his remarks with sharp whacks of a boot. And then he got a tin bucket, advised Ump for good and all to hold his peace, and clapped the bucket over him.

The Doctor slept no more, not because of Ump's warning,

but because dawn was at hand, and he had certain gleeful plans for showing his son-in-law how to extract wary old trout from the deep pool, all before breakfast.

When the others were again asleep, he carefully got into his khaki, jointed up his split bamboo, and ducked outside. He did not hear the tin bucket suddenly overturn as he went through the wet fern for the river. He would not have appreciated it had he known that Ump was out to protect his master in the forest.

He followed the snag, turned down the river a quarter of a mile, and came to the bluff. It towered above the important little stream, only a ledge twenty feet above the water permitting passage. To cast from this ledge took all of the Doctor's skill. But his wrist had lost none of its cunning. His fly flecked the pool for an instant, skipped away, touched the wimples again. A brown flash split the water. The Doctor whipped a wimple farther upstream; the great trout followed.

He struck. The Doctor held his pole rigid. He forgot to play the trout. The silk line snapped.

Behind him on the ledge was an ominous rattle of unsheathed claws on rock. He wheeled, his pole held upright.

And there was the Unknown, the thing that does not happen, the thing undreamed. He was face to face with the wilderness, up against what men were up against ere ever they placed word upon paper.

A cougar was flattened on the ledge between him and camp. It was twenty feet away—one leap. Nine feet it stretched to the tip of its heavy tail, and that tail whipped from side to side against the rocks. Its shoulders bulged above its sinuous body.

Almost soundlessly it snarled, its mouth vast, its little ears flattened on its tigerish head. The Doctor stared. As a matter of knowledge, he knew that cougars seldom attack. Yet as he stared it crept forward, and what he read in its yellow-notch eyes any man, however unlearned, would have read and known for truth.

He tried to think. He could not go around the cougar. He dared not turn and run. He took a tentative step backward.

That, too, was dangerous. The cougar slid forward,

covered half the space between them. He knew it was fatal to step backward, but he did not know why—did not know that a den in the ledge behind him held three striped kittens, did not know that the cougar's heavy dugs ached with motherhood. His move backward brought him closer to her young, and made her rage flame higher.

He thought of weapons. The cougar slowly crawled. He saw the slender pole in his hand. Carefully he lowered it, touched the cat's nose, whipped her nose gently.

That annoyed her. She struck at the pole with a paw that could have broken a stallion's back. His own popping eyes riveted on hers, the Doctor continued to whip her.

But that was only a makeshift. It distracted her for a moment, but it teased her, fanned her rage. Her tail lashed. She would leap. Something must happen—*something*.

The man and the cougar heard it at the same instant. The cat half whirled, presenting a mouthful of white, saberlike teeth.

It was Ump. He came flying like a ball of white fluff. He did not hesitate. He forgot that he was a mite of a dog, dreamed again that he was great and shaggy, hip-high on his master, armed with terrible jaws to lock on a tiger's throat, and strength to hurl a tiger down.

He had been made by man into a lapling, a pitiful plaything for sorry women; yet his master was in danger, and Ump was dog.

Snarling a terrible little snarl, he flew into the cougar's face. There was a sudden storm of tawny arms and legs. During that storm the fat Doctor ran. Even Ump, running from an indignant squirrel, had not run as the Doctor ran.

That day the party drove out of the hills, down a dank lane between two walls of crooning forest. The wind sang all the old songs. The car struck all the ruts. The Doctor's eyes wandered again and again to a front lamp that was covered with prints of tiny muddy feet.

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

By RICHMOND BROOKS BARRETT

From *Smart Set*

I

ON WEDNESDAY evenings Mrs. William Dent and Thomas Edgeworth dined with their mother. Old Mrs. Edgeworth always made a point, on these occasions, of wearing stiffly brocaded gowns and an extravagant array of jewels. Sargent had painted a merciless portrait of her in just such a costume; she had chuckled drily over it, christened herself a "Holbein hag" and despatched the canvas to Mrs. Dent as a birthday gift. Grimly filial, Mrs. Dent had hung the thing in her drawing room; by way of eloquent comment, however, she had placed a sepia print of Whistler's mother near by.

Mrs. Edgeworth never failed to enjoy her daughter's Wednesday evening mood of suppressed irritability. Mrs. Dent was always dignified and polite in her treatment of the old woman. She was a stout, maternal creature who boasted of the fact that not once in her useful life had she consciously wounded another. If her eyebrows criticized, her words were consistent in their forbearing sweetness.

"It's rather too bad, Charlotte, that you never had any children," Mrs. Edgeworth sometimes commented. "This being a mother to the whole world is a large order—even for your great nature." Her words would have a satiric bite.

"There are certain tragedies one would prefer not to talk about." Charlotte's patient gaze would be fixed on one of Mrs. Edgeworth's celebrated Madonnas as she spoke. She would be careful, at such times, to avoid her mother's sharp

eyes. The old woman had her opinion as to the glowingly healthy Charlotte's childless state. Her obvious scepticism on the subject was a perpetual cross to the younger woman.

"By the way, Mother," Mrs. Dent remarked gently one Wednesday evening, "I'm afraid you haven't noticed my new gown."

"New gown?" Mrs. Edgeworth showed surprise. As a matter of fact, she had already taken in with amused thoroughness the aggressively simple severity of Charlotte's costume. "I thought you never had one."

Charlotte smiled.

"I don't wonder you thought so," she acknowledged, with ill-concealed pride. "But when one has to appear on the platform, one mustn't be out at the elbows."

Charlotte's conversation was ever rich in "ones"; she avoided the vulgar "I" whenever possible.

Mrs. Edgeworth busied herself with her lobster. She was aware that her daughter had thrown out two hints that required development. The new gown was to serve as a tactful point of departure for a lesson in economy; the modest mention of the "platform" would be enlarged to show forth Mrs. Dent's theory of one's duty to the public. Ever since her husband's death she had devoted herself to the spiritual elevation of the masses.

Charlotte, waiting to be pressed for particulars, cleared her throat. Mrs. Edgeworth was still occupied in picking at her lobster.

"I have discovered a splendid little seamstress." It was characteristic of Mrs. Dent to employ the epithet "little" in connection with any woman who worked for a living. "She is *very* reasonable and doesn't waste the cloth." She was addressing her brother Thomas, hoping to draw her mother's attention by thus pointedly turning away from her.

Thomas showed intense interest in the communication. It was his way of conveying a rebuke to the frivolous old woman.

"I see!" he exclaimed with knitted brows, as if he had seized upon the meaning of words that, in their subtlety, would have baffled a less clever man.

Mrs. Edgeworth laughed.

"No, she doesn't waste the cloth," she murmured. "The waist's indecently tight in front."

It was Mrs. Dent's opportunity now to change the subject and thus prevent her mother from indulging in further vulgar remarks of a personal nature.

She leaned forward, her eyes dwelling tenderly on Thomas.

"Our drive starts to-morrow morning," she said, enunciating with as great distinctness as if her brother were deaf.

"Another drive!" Mrs. Edgeworth, with her beady eyes on her plate, seemed to be confiding in her maimed lobster. "Good Lord, how can there be a soul still left to be saved after all these years of aggressive campaigning?"

Thomas and his sister ignored their mother's mumbled comment.

"If there's anything I can do for you, don't hesitate to call on me, Charlotte," Thomas urged.

Mrs. Dent laughed.

"I may have to take you up on that, Thomas," she warned him, archly. "I must give a little talk every evening for the next fortnight. My voice *may* desert me." She lowered it at once, as if to safeguard it for her public. "These lecture halls! The dust seems to sift into one's lungs. But *you* know how it is." That last statement, soldering brother and sister in a bond of martyrdom, delicately excluded their ribald mother.

"I have prepared careful notes for each lecture," Mrs. Dent pursued. "If I do fall by the way, you and I could go over the outlines together and you could take my place. My understudy, so to speak." She acknowledged her irrepressible sense of humour by shaking her head in apology for the quaint witticism.

"I must send you a check in the morning," Thomas murmured. "To whom shall I make it payable?" He had taken out a little notebook and had the pencil poised.

"To me—as president." Charlotte lowered her eyes in elaborate humility.

Then Thomas spoke to his mother in a tone that was full of staunch championship of his sister's cause. "And you'll of *course* send your check also, Mother?"

"And who's to be given a leg up out of the mire this time?" the old woman wanted to know.

Her children exchanged pained glances.

"Evidently you don't read the papers." Thomas was stern.

"Only the murders on the front page," Mrs. Edgeworth confessed.

Charlotte at that took up the cudgels for herself. "Tomorrow morning the drive for the Girl Scouts of America will be launched," she announced, dramatically. "I believe —indeed I *hope*—that you are the only mother in the United States who has known nothing of it till this late hour."

"I daresay." Mrs. Edgeworth didn't sound contrite, however. "As to sending a check in the morning—I'll do nothing of the kind, Thomas. I don't approve of your Girl Scouts; I have no desire to see a seething mass of Gene Stratton Porters taking twittering possession of our land."

"Ah!" Charlotte's monosyllable had the quality of a distressed sigh. She closed her lips tight, and, sending a glance of mute appeal in her brother's direction, bowed her head.

"Besides, I can't afford to give a cent to anything just now," the old woman pursued.

"Sometimes I don't *wonder* there are socialists in this world." Thomas informed her sharply. "When a wealthy woman like you refuses to acknowledge any duty in the disposal of that wealth——"

"But think of all I've done for people," Mrs. Edgeworth protested. "Bernard Berenson and the Duveens, for example!"

She wagged her head maliciously at her son and in her twinkling eyes there was a gleam of derisive scorn.

"Why did God give *me* such children, I wonder?" she cried.

"You say you can't afford to give anything." Thomas's air now resembled that of a criminal lawyer intent on wresting the truth from his victim. "May I ask why that is, Mother?"

Mrs. Edgeworth, however, was quite willing to admit the facts at once; she had no intention of humouring her son in his third-degree tactics. "I purchased a Botticelli Madonna this morning—that's why, Thomas."

Charlotte indulged in a slight shudder and pushed her plate from her. Her mother's statement had evidently had the effect of taking away her appetite.

"One does feel the sinfulness of extravagance at a time like this," she murmured. "The money paid for a small piece of canvas would have given hundreds of delicate young girls, with weak lungs, a fortnight in some mountain camp. But one doesn't think of that till it's too late." With great generosity, she was implying that her mother had been just rash and thoughtless, not consciously stony-hearted.

"How touching, Charlotte!" Mrs. Edgeworth cried. "But I may as well confess that I've been deliberating all day about another picture—an 'Epiphany' of Gentile da Fabriano's." This news was received in grim silence by Mrs. Dent and her brother. "Yes—*fancy* it! Did you ever hear of such luck?"

The old woman seemed to be taking for granted her children's boisterous enthusiasm on the subject.

"I don't wonder you're amazed," she went on slyly. "I really can't afford it at present; but I've decided to snatch it up, anyhow. You know how it is: there are certain chances one can't let go by——"

Thomas interrupted his mother's ecstasy.

"I think," he remarked to Charlotte, "that, provided I steel myself to some drastic skimping in the next few months, I shall be able to send you a check for five thousand dollars."

"One likes best the donations that entail sacrifice," his sister returned with dignity.

II

"Of course, in a way I'm as much of a fanatic as my son and daughter. But then, I'm eighty years old and an octogenarian is always a bit insane about one thing or another." Mrs. Edgeworth, leaning heavily on the arm of Dennis, her stalwart English maid, was going the daily rounds of her magnificent house with young Gregory Sanborn.

Though the man was thirty-five, he was always called "young Sanborn," or "the boy that trails around after Mrs. Tom Edgeworth." He was slim and blond and rather bashful; certainly he didn't look his age. Besides, he had never learned to control his enthusiasms. Art and Mrs. Edgeworth —these were his altars of adoration.

His worship of the old woman and her treasures combined joyful exultation and downright awe. He knelt with rever-

ence at his shrines, but his eyes had at the same time an irrepressible beam of romantic ardour. Worshipper and knightly champion was Sanborn. He thought the sardonic, bedizened old woman the most wonderful creature that had ever been born; he would have obeyed any outlandish command from her. The two had been staunch friends for five years.

Mrs. Edgeworth had a complete knowledge of the ridicule that was dealt out to them in their queer intimacy. It didn't bother her in the least. She enjoyed the company of her "Sancho Panza," as she called Sanborn. With him she had a stimulating time; he was the only person who relished her every shaft of satire and therefore she found to her own satisfaction that her wit was at its sharpest when directed into his ears. He was a dear boy, and the fact that he let himself be overshadowed by her didn't harm him. Though he tried to be a painter, his success could never be more than a mediocre one. Hero worship was his true vocation. Mrs. Edgeworth had soon decided she had as substantial a claim to his devotion as anybody else. So she had allowed him to tag about after her whenever he liked.

They had paused to-day, as usual, beneath Titian's superb portrait of a Venetian nobleman.

"I hate to think, Gregory, that after I'm dead this fine old roué will be sold and that the proceeds will take a giggling crowd of Girl Scouts—members of the Easter-Lily or Tube-Rose troop—out into God's pure air. It isn't right, now is it?" she put it up to him.

Sanborn laughed heartily.

"No, he wasn't cut out to help poor girls," he admitted.

"But, you see, that will be his fate," she pressed. "All my wicked possessions will be put to some charitable end. Even my disreputable Leda over there will go at auction, and the price she fetches will buy gymnasium fixtures—dumb-bells and Indian clubs—for the Young Men's Christian Association. And this house, Gregory! What's to become of this house? Will it be utilized as the Supreme Temple for the thirty-second degree members of the Girl Scouts?"

"Dear Mrs. Edgeworth," he returned with gravity, "rather than permit that sort of thing, you'd really better leave it to the City of New York."

"A public museum!" She shuddered. "That would be desecration, too. The solemn tramp of schoolmarms through my rooms would reach me in the tomb, Gregory. If the place weren't fireproof, I'd burn it down, make a funeral-pyre of it!"

She was silent for a moment.

Then, "Ah, well!" she sighed at length, "I'm abominably tired. When my legs shake under me at a time like this, it shows I'm going downhill at breakneck speed. Six months ago I could stand in front of that splendid fellow"—she waved her hand at Titian's grandee—"and not be aware that I *had* legs. Come along!" She poked her stolid maid into motion. "We'll have some tea, Gregory. I'll try to be less lugubrious."

By the time they reached the drawing room the old woman was gasping. She threw herself into her chair.

"I'll have to come to a decision soon, my dear fellow," she panted. "Every campaign my children go in for drives a bright new nail into my coffin. Rage is bad for octogenarians. I think, when I die, I'll have myself mummified and wrapped in gaudy cerements and sent around to my son's house for a souvenir."

She wagged her head in grim amusement.

Sanborn, with commendable tact, gave the conversation a veer.

"I lunched with some of the Metropolitan Museum crowd yesterday," he announced. "We agreed that the new Botticelli was the finest in the country. He never did a thing of more exquisite distinction. It has all the mastery of line, all the strange chilliness of the Uffizi Venus. And those few marvellous frost-bitten roses in the Virgin's hand!"

His eyes glowed with enthusiasm. The man's true character came out only when he was discussing some work of art that he loved.

"I can't explain the effect it has on me, you know. It—well," he gave a rather apologetic laugh at his clumsy attempt to put his state of mind into figurative speech, "it almost makes my lungs sting, the way an awfully cold winter day does. It rarefies the air, if you know what I'm trying to get at——"

"That's exactly it." The old woman nodded with decision and her haggard face took on a new animation. "It's

like a wind that's come over miles of dazzling snow. You've got *just* the quality of that picture, Gregory. Now the Gentile—that's so different. That's all joy and melting softness —a real Italian spring's in the air there——"

So they talked, eager, incoherent, fascinated. They groped with an intense earnestness for the proper words to express the elusive charm of this or that picture, and, at last tracking down the right phrase, pounced on it gleefully. In their intense excitement they drew closer together until in the end Mrs. Edgeworth was accompanying her statements with quick taps on the man's knee.

Then Mrs. Dent was announced.

Mrs. Edgeworth shrugged her shoulders impatiently and settled back in her great chair.

"Upon my word, Gregory," she exclaimed, "I don't know what I should do without you! I should have been dead five years ago if you hadn't appeared on the scene."

Charlotte, on the threshold, inclined her head in Sanborn's direction with sweet civility; she made it apparent, however, that her cordiality had been achieved only after a supreme effort. In the presence of an artist, Mrs. Dent always appeared a bit distrustful; it was as if she feared that men with such queer natures might at any moment take it into their heads to visit a lewd, Satyr-like embrace upon her. Holding herself very erect, she glided across the room to her mother and placed a tender kiss on her wrinkled and rouged left cheek.

"How do you do, Dennis?" Mrs. Dent believed that all menials adored her; she therefore made her greetings to them in a tone of humility—just to show them that she felt herself unworthy of being worshipped.

"May I have some tea?" she asked. "I am excessively tired. One determines to hoard one's strength at a time like this," she remarked to her mother, "and then suddenly it's gone—one's forgotten one's staunch resolution."

Polite as ever, she smiled at Sanborn.

"Don't train your batteries on Gregory," Mrs. Edgeworth warned her. "He's got no money to give to your drive, Charlotte."

Mrs. Dent brought her thin lips together disapprovingly and said nothing.

"What have you come for? It's not Wednesday, my child." The old woman was rude.

"I had something of importance to tell you." Mrs. Dent opened her lips for this statement, then closed them again with an air of finality.

"Indeed!" Mrs. Edgeworth showed intense interest "Tell me at once, Charlotte. Don't keep me in this nerve racking suspense. Poor Gregory is on tenter-hooks, too. So speak right up. Don't be shy."

Mrs. Dent's lifted eyebrows witnessed her dislike of sharing confidences with servants and artists. Sanborn got to his feet

"Sit down, Gregory," Mrs. Edgeworth commanded peremptorily. "If my daughter's news isn't fit for your ears, it's not fit for mine."

Charlotte coloured at this vulgar innuendo. She retained her matronly dignity, however, despite the old woman's malicious chuckle.

"Very well, Mother," she murmured. "It was my thought to spare *you*—that was all."

"Dear me!" Mrs. Edgeworth mused for a moment. Then, "*Don't* tell me, Charlotte, that you and the other Scout Mothers are planning to wear khaki breeches in future!" she cried.

Sanborn and Dennis exchanged surreptitious grins at this bit of shameless buffoonery.

Mrs. Dent drew herself up majestically.

"I didn't come here to listen to jokes, Mother," she murmured. "I haven't time for that sort of—er—relaxation."

"Forgive me!" the old woman begged. "We ancients do run on so. Even *you* will lose your deadly conciseness when you're eighty, my darling."

Charlotte cleared her throat in true public-platform style and her gaze, shifting from one to another of her audience, drew them to attention as deftly as the rap of a chairman's hammer.

"I ran in this afternoon," she elucidated, her eyes focused now on her mother, "to tell you of a little scheme that I worked out in my own head—a plot, I suppose, it might be called, to raise money for our drive."

Mrs. Edgeworth took advantage of her daughter's impressive pause to exclaim "Hear! Hear!" in a high treble.

Charlotte saw fit to ignore the derisive applause. She turned her attention squarely on Gregory Sanborn.

"The point is, Mr. Sanborn," she announced, "my mother was unable to contribute to the cause. She was rather strapped, to put it baldly. When one buys art treasures one is apt to find it difficult to aid charitable organizations."

"How true that is!" was the old woman's sly comment.

"Of course," Mrs. Dent forged ahead doggedly, "one realized that Mother would have *liked* to help. It was just an unfortunate mischance—her having purchased certain canvases at a certain time." Her tone was one of sorrowful indulgence for the aged culprit. "So I've sprung a little surprise!" This rather archly. "At three this afternoon a few of my friends gathered in my drawing room. Mr. Tomlinson Jones—a very fine man whose heart is in the Girl Scout movement—acted as master of ceremonies."

"And what has Mr. Tomlinson Jones got to do with *me*, pray?" Mrs. Edgeworth wanted to know.

"Ah, you'd never guess!" Charlotte was playfully mysterious.

"I don't care to guess," the old woman snapped. "Do get on with your story, Charlotte."

Mrs. Dent looked hurt.

"Thanks to Mr. Jones, Mother," she said with a touch of asperity, "we have put you on our list as donating five thousand dollars to the Girl Scouts of America."

Mrs. Edgeworth threw up her hands in mock horror.

"Perfidy!" she cried. "Sheer perfidy!"

"In my drawing room there hung a certain canvas." Charlotte intoned the words, as if they composed the first line of a poem.

"*Hung!*" her mother interrupted. "I begin to see light."

"It was a canvas"—Mrs. Dent always called a painting a "canvas"—"that I never liked. From the start, I have considered it a most cruel caricature. To me, old age is a very beautiful thing." This last confession was directed at the bewildered Sanborn.

"To me, old age is a hideous joke!" Mrs. Edgeworth protested venomously. "Don't look so thunderstruck, Gregory. My daughter is speaking of John Sargent's portrait of me, that masterpiece of unblushing realism."

"As you wish!" Mrs. Dent was polite. "Our opinions differ. I consider it an insult. Every time I have looked at it it has made me unhappy. I could stand it no *longer*. Mr. Jones auctioned it off for me to-day. It was bought by Mrs. Petherby; I believe she plans to place it in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. But the main point is that the five thousand dollars has been entered as *your* very generous donation, Mother."

"Upon my word, Charlotte, I congratulate you!" Mrs. Edgeworth flung herself back in her chair and burst into uncontrollable merriment. "It's the first time in your life you've ever done anything I could genuinely admire you for. But this was bold, this was admirable, this was *heroic!* You've played a magnificent joke on me, my child. It was worthy of *me* at my most diabolical, I swear!"

Charlotte, during this outburst, had risen with dignity to her feet.

"Please, Mother!" she protested with great distinctness; apparently she felt that she was dealing with a fit of hysteria.

Bending over, she stroked one of the old woman's hands. "It was not my idea to play a joke on you, *believe* me. I thought my little surprise would delight you. If I have hurt you—ah, I am *sorry*."

"But you haven't hurt me; you've tickled me to death," the old woman blithely assured her. "Here am I, hoist with my own petard into the front ranks of the Scout contributors. John Sargent and I! Good Lord, I take off my hat to you, my child!"

"You're quite all right? You're sure you're quite all right?" Mrs. Dent's voice was vibrant with emotion.

"Of course—don't be a goose and spoil your pretty trick." Her mother was sharp. "Now do run off to your next lecture, Charlotte. I've something I want to say to Gregory."

After Mrs. Dent had glided from the room, Mrs. Edgeworth fixed Sanborn with a bright, piercing glance. She nodded her head at him wisely three or four times.

Then she announced:

"You see, Gregory! Didn't I tell you how it would be? The battle has begun—righteousness against beauty. Draw up your chair, my dear fellow, while I tell you *my* nefarious

scheme. Leave the room, Dennis! You seem an honourable old thing, but you're human, after all, and these Scout Mothers wouldn't be above bribing you——"

III

The following Wednesday, Mrs. Edgeworth, supported on one side by the dauntless Dennis and on the other by an old and trusted manservant, emerged from the train at the Williamstown railroad station. She was tremulous and gaspingly out of breath, but her black eyes twinkled with amusement.

"Ah, there you are, my dear fellow!" She pushed her attendants away with her elbows and held out both hands to Gregory Sanborn, who had just hurried along the platform to her side. "You're proving yourself the *great* martyr for the cause of beauty." She examined him shrewdly. "But you do show the strain; you look absurdly woebegone." She gave a dry chuckle of satisfaction. "What a sell on us it would have been if I'd dropped dead in the train!"

Sanborn's polite smile was a trifle strained. "I have the motor here," he murmured.

"You haven't neglected a single necessary vulgarity?" she asked. "You've done everything in the proper style?"

He nodded.

"Everything is according to the story-books," he told her.

Mrs. Edgeworth patted his sleeve in offhand friendliness.

"Poor boy!" she exclaimed. "It's a tragic moment for you—I know that. Thank God, I'm old enough and coarse enough to take it as a lark. But you won't be under a cloud for long, Gregory. Why, two years from now people will have forgotten that I ever existed."

"You're tired, Mrs. Edgeworth—and there's a damnable chill in the air here!" Sanborn's voice had lost its furtive, guilty note and his face had brightened. There was no question about it—the old woman had a tonic quality. "Let's get into the motor."

"Let's get the whole dreadful business over with, you mean!" she contradicted him. "I must be in bed by seven, Dennis tells me, with piles of hot-water bottles dotted about

my person. Does that strike you as in accordance with the story-books, Gregory?"

She shrugged.

"Well, it's a grim little adventure, no one can deny that," she commented. "A funeral couldn't have less rosy tints."

She grasped his arm and beckoned Dennis to her.

"But there's no point in hastening my end by catching cold in this miserable station," she exclaimed. "Come ahead!"

In the motor, Mrs. Edgeworth put her head on her maid's shoulder.

"How long a drive is it?" she asked Sanborn.

"Two hours," he returned.

"Very well, I shall nap a while," she mumbled, and in a few moments was asleep.

"The sheer barbarity of it! What one's children will drive one to!" Mrs. Edgeworth was dragging her stiff old legs up the porch steps of a dingy little cottage in a Vermont town. Sanborn had a firm grip of her arm. Behind them walked in gloomy silence Dennis and the manservant.

"You've warned this long-suffering divine what to expect, Gregory?" the old woman asked. "If not, we'd better have restoratives ready."

Sanborn achieved a rueful smile.

"I've told him the truth, Mrs. Edgeworth," he returned.

"That's—fortunate," she panted.

Suddenly she burst out laughing and nodded in the direction of the servants.

"Dennis and Parker are about to break into three rousing cheers, I believe!" she cried. "Ah—the door is opening. The heroine entered the parsonage on the arm of her great-grandson. Upon my word, the vulgarity of this business is almost too much for *me!* As for you, poor boy——"

IV

They were sitting, the newly married pair, in front of the open fire in their drawing room at the Vermont Inn. Dennis and Parker had been sent off to celebrate "the nuptial wake," as their mistress humorously dubbed it. The old woman was leaning back in her chair. She was very weary,

now the business was settled, and made no effort to combat the fit of yawning that had her in its grip; but she still could chuckle sardonically at the grim farce they had enacted and her eyes had a merry snap.

"Now, then, Gregory!" she told the man. "It was very sweet of you to leave all the actual sordid financial details to me. I brought a copy of the new will along with me—just to prove I didn't betray the trust."

She fumbled about in the bag she always carried and located the document.

"There, my dear fellow." She pointed out a clause with a gnarled forefinger. "You see, my New York house and all it contains go to you, with sufficient income to keep the place going. Everything else will be my children's. They've no cause for complaint. I have a disgraceful lot of money, you know. Thomas and Charlotte can contribute in most orgiastic fashion to their drives and things. But my treasure —my *real* children—are yours by right of your exquisite martyrdom."

"But, my dear Mrs. Edgeworth!" the man burst out.

"Mrs. Sanborn, if you please," she contradicted him with a wag of her head.

He laughed, but made no attempt to incorporate the correction into his discourse. "I—I honestly wish you wouldn't call this business my 'martyrdom.' As a matter of fact, you are the best friend I've ever had. I'm *glad* to have done this for you. I haven't a single regret as to the actual—er—arrangement; it was only the method that rather—well, *hurt*, if you know what I mean."

"Ah—I understand perfectly, *perfectly*," she assured him. "But we couldn't go at it in decent fashion. My children wouldn't have been properly stumped unless we'd made romantic fools of ourselves. But it will all blow over soon enough—and there you'll be, with Titians and Giorgiones and Botticellis to soothe your poor wounded sensibilities. The method was unavoidable, granted my dreadful offspring——"

She was silent for a moment.

Then, sitting up quite straight of a sudden, she announced: "*Mind*, Gregory, your responsibility isn't over at my death. You've got to marry again with all speed and have

children of your own. We've done this abominable deed in order to safeguard my collection—and not for one paltry generation, either. You must promise me to fall in love with some kindred spirit and do your duty by posterity. And before I die I'll coach you how *not* to bring up children; I'll set my Charlotte and Thomas up before you as deplorable warnings. But, good Lord!" she sighed. "I have an idea that, when I get to Heaven, I shall have to begin at once fighting celestial Girl Scout movements and empyrean Y. M. C. A. drives. God will never let me have peace after this blasphemous marriage. So, when I look down over my gold bar, at least let me hear your infants lisping of the glories of the Quattrocento in Sienna and such-like academic matters."

"To tell the truth, dear Mrs. Edgeworth," Sanborn murmured with a timid laugh, "the—the woman's already picked. She's with us in our plot. She'll wait for me, though I can't understand what she sees in *me*, if you get what I mean——"

"Ah—I'm *overjoyed!*" The old woman leaned forward and patted him on the arm. "That simplifies things at once. Now I can die in peace."

After a moment she remarked:

"My old bones tell me it's nearly seven, Gregory. Dennis will be here soon. I want you to send off a wire to Charlotte. It's Wednesday, so address it to my house. She and Thomas will be reporting there for dinner. And lay it on thick, poor boy! Elopement, drive in dusk to quaint old parsonage, ecstatic happiness in the dear little inn, etc., etc. They've got to be fed a bitter dose. They mustn't think our motives are anything but disgracefully amatory. We're not to give them a loophole for pity. And you'll despatch the sentimental tidings to the New York papers also—and be sure you *do* make the messages sentimental. Our noble purpose we shall keep to ourselves. If Charlotte guessed the truth, she might weep over us in our pitiful damnation. Heavens, should she scent out a 'cause' she'd be unbearable. In that case, we might just as well have spared ourselves this jaunt and got the matter off our minds in New York."

There came a knock at the door.

"Dennis and the hot-water bottles!" the old woman announced. "The story-book details are finished. Goodnight, Gregory. You *are* a dear boy——"

TACT

By THOMAS BEER

From *Saturday Evening Post*

"YOU make me sick," said Mrs. Egg. She spoke with force. Her three daughters murmured, "Why, Mamma!" A squirrel ran up the trunk of an apple tree that shaded the veranda; a farm hand turned from weeding the mint bed by the garage. Mrs. Egg didn't care. Her chins shook fiercely. She ate a wafer, emptied her glass of iced tea, and spread her little hands with their buried rings on the table.

"You make me sick, girls," she said. "Dammy's been home out of the Navy precisely seven weeks an' two days, an' a hour hasn't passed but what one of you've been phonin' me from town about what he has or ain't done unbecomin' to a boy that's engaged to Edith Sims! I don't know why you girls expect a boy that was champion heavy-weight wrestler of the Atlantic Fleet an' stands six foot four and a half inches in his bare feet to get all thrilled over bein' engaged. A person that was four years in the Navy an' went as far as Japan has pretty naturally been in love before, and——"

"Mamma!"

Mrs. Egg ate another sugar wafer and continued relentlessly in her soft drawl "—ain't likely to get all worked up over bein' engaged to a sixteen-year-old girl who can't cook any better than a Cuban on his own say-so. As for those spiced guavas he sent home from Cuba in March," she mused, "I thought they were fierce. As for his takin' Edith Sims out drivin' in his overalls and a shirt, Adam John Egg is the best-lookin' person in this family and you know it. You three girls are the sent'mentalest women in the state of Ohio and I don't know how your husbands stand it. My gee! D'you expect Dammy to chase this girl around heavin' roses

at her like a fool in a movie?" She panted and peered into the iced-tea pitcher. Emotion made her thirsty. Mrs. Egg aimed an affable bawl at the kitchen door and called, "Benjamina! I'd be awful obliged if you'd make up some more iced tea, please. Dammy'll be through pickin' peaches soon and he's usually thirsty about four o'clock."

Her new cook nodded and came down the long veranda. The daughters stared civilly at this red-haired girl, taller than their tall selves. Benjamina lifted the vacant pitcher and carried it silently away. Her slim height vanished into the kitchen and the oldest daughter whispered, "Mercy, Mamma, she's almost as tall as Dammy!"

"She's just six feet," said Mrs. Egg with deliberate clarity meant to reach Benjamina; "but extremely graceful, I think. My gee! It's perfectly embarrassin' to ask a girl as refined as that to clear the table or dust. She went through high school in Cleveland and can read all the French in the cook-book exactly as if it made sense. It's a pleasure to have such a person in the house."

The second daughter leaned forward and said, "Mamma, that's another thing! I do think it's pretty—untactful of Dammy to take this girl's brother around in the car and introduce him to Edith Sims and her folks as if——"

"I think it was extremely sensible," Mrs. Egg puffed. "Hamish is a very int'restin' boy, and has picked up milkin' remarkably when he's only been here a week, and Dammy's taught him to sem'phore, or whatever that wiggling-your-arms thing is called. And he appreciates Dammy a lot." The plate of sugar wafers was stripped to bare crumbs. Mrs. Egg turned her flushed face and addressed the unseen: "Benjamina, you might bring some more cookies when the tea's ready, and some of those cup cakes you made this mornin'. Dammy ate five of them at lunch."

Benjamina answered "Yes, Mrs. Egg," in her slow fashion.

"Mamma," said the youngest daughter, "it's all right for you to say that Dammy is absolutely perfect, but the Simses are the most refined people in town, and it does look disgraceful for Dammy not to dress up a little when he goes there, and he's got all those beautiful tailor-made clothes from New York."

Mrs. Egg patiently drawled, "Fern, that's an awful

uninterestin' remark. Dammy looks exactly like a seal in a aquarium when he's dressed up, his things fit so smooth; but a boy that was four years in the Navy and helps milk a hundred and twenty-seven cows twice a day, besides mendin' all the machinery on the place, is *not* called upon to dress up evenings to go see a girl he's known all his life. He's twenty-one years and nine weeks old, an' capable of managin' his own concerns. . . . Thank you, Benjamina," she told the red-haired girl as the fresh pitcher clinked on the table and the cup cakes gleamed in yellow charm beside it. "I do hate to trouble you on such a hot day."

Benjamina smiled nicely and withdrew. Mrs. Egg ate one of the cup cakes and thought it admirable. She broke out, "My gee! There's another thing! You girls keep actin' as if Dammy wasn't as smart as should be! On the other hand, he drove up to Cleveland and looked at the list of persons willin' to work in the country and didn't waste time askin' the agency questions, but went round to Benjamina's flat and ate some choc'late cake. Then he loaded her and Hamish into the car and brought 'em down, all between six in the mornin' and twelve at night. I've had eight days of rest an' comfort for a result. . . . My gee! Your papa's the second biggest dairyman in this state, but that don't keep me in intell'gent cooks!"

The three young matrons sighed. Mrs. Egg considered them for a moment over her glass, and sniffed, "Mercy! This has been a pleasant afternoon!"

"Mamma," said the first-born, "you can't very well deny that Dammy's awful careless for an engaged man. He ought to've got a ring for Edith Sims when he was home at Christmas and the engagement came off. And——"

Mrs. Egg lost patience. She exclaimed, "Golden Jerusalem! Dammy got engaged at Judge Randolph's party the night before he went back to Brooklyn to his ship! My gee! I never heard such idiotic nonsense! You girls act as if Edith Sims—whose ears are much too big even if she does dress her hair low—was too good for Adam Egg! She's a nice child, an' her folks are nice and all the rest of it! . . . Dammy," she panted as the marvel appeared, "here's your sisters!"

Adam came up the long veranda with a clothes basket of peaches on his right shoulder. He nodded his black head

to his sisters and put the basket noiselessly down. Then he blew smoke from both nostrils of his bronze, small nose and rubbed its bridge with the cigarette. He seldom spoke. Mrs. Egg swiftly filled a glass with iced tea and Adam began to absorb this pensively. His sisters cooed and his mother somewhat forgave them. They had sense enough to adore Adam, anyhow. In hours of resolute criticism Mrs. Egg sometimes admitted that Adam's nose was too short. He was otherwise beyond praise. His naked dark shoulders rippled and convulsed as he stooped to gather three cup cakes. A stained undershirt hid some of his terrific chest and his canvas trousers hung beltless on his narrow hips. Mrs. Egg secretly hoped that he would change these garments before he went to call on his betrothed. The three cup cakes departed through his scarlet, wide mouth into his insatiable system of muscles, and Adam lit his next cigarette. Smoke surged in a tide about his immovable big eyes. He looked at the road beyond the apple trees, then swung and made swift, enigmatic gestures with his awesome arms to young Hamish Saunders, loitering by the garage. The valuable Hamish responded with more flappings of his lesser arms and trotted down the grass. The letter carrier approached the delivery box at the gates of the monstrous farm.

"What did you sem'phore to Hamish, lamb?" Mrs. Egg asked.

Adam said "Mail" and sat down on the floor.

He fixed a black stare on the pitcher and Mrs. Egg filled his glass. Muscles rose in ovals and ropes under the hairless polish of his arm as he took the frail tumbler. His hard throat stirred fleetly and his short feet wriggled in moccasins of some soiled, soft leather, indicating satisfaction. Mrs. Egg sighed. Benjamina made tea perfectly. She must tactfully tell the girl that Adam liked it. No female could hear that fact without a thrill.

"Package for you," said young Hamish, bounding up the steps. He gave Adam a stamped square box, announced "I signed for it," and retired shyly from the guests to read a post card. He was a burly lad of sixteen, in a shabby darned jersey and some outgrown breeches of Adam's. Mrs. Egg approved of him; he appreciated Adam.

The marvel tore the box to pieces with his lean fingers and

extracted a flat case of velvet. Two rings glittered in its satin lining. Adam contemplated the diamond of the engagement ring and the band of gold set with tiny brilliants which would forever nail Edith Sims to his perfections. His sisters squealed happily. Mrs. Egg thought how many pounds of Egg's A1 Butter were here consumed in vainglory and sighed gently.

She drawled, "My gee, Dammy! Nobody can poss'bly say you ain't got good taste in jewellery, anyhow," and shot a stare of fierce pride at her daughters. They rose. She knew that the arrival of these gauds would be known in Ilium forthwith. She said "Well, good evenin', girls," and accepted their kisses affably.

Adam paid no attention to the going of the oldest daughter's motor car; he was staring at the rings, and the blank brown of his forehead was disturbed by some superb and majestic fancy current under the dense smoothness of his jet hair. Hamish Saunders came shyly to peep at the gems and stooped his curly red head. The boy had large gray eyes, like those of his sister, and her hawk nose, which Mrs. Egg thought patrician.

She said, "Hamish, you ain't had any tea yet, lamb. Dammy's left some. Benjamina puts in exactly sugar enough, an' I never heard of mint in iced tea before. It's awful interestin'."

Hamish soberly drank some tea and asked Adam, "Want the motor bike, Mr. Egg?"

Adam nodded. The boy went leaping down the flagged walk to the garage and busily led Adam's red motorcycle back to the veranda steps. Then he gazed with reverence at Adam's shoulders, felt his right biceps, and sadly walked off toward the barns. The herd of the Egg Dairy Company was an agitation of twinkling horns and multicoloured hides in the white-fenced yard. The ten hired men were sponging their hands at the model washstand by the colossal water tower's engine house. Mrs. Egg ate the last cup cake and looked off at the town of Ilium, spread in a lizard of trees at the top of a long slope. The motor containing her female offspring was sliding into the main street. The daughters would stop at the Sims house to tell the refined Edith that her engagement ring had come.

Mrs. Egg pursed her lips courageously and said, "Dammy, you might change your duds, dear, before you take Edith her sol'taire. It's a kind of a formal occasion, sort of."

The giant pronounced lazily the one syllable "Bunk," and turned his face toward his mother. Then he said, "You've got awful pretty hands, Mamma."

"Mercy, Dammy," Mrs. Egg panted, flushing. Her prodigiousness shook in the special chair of oak under the blow of this compliment. She tittered, "Well, your papa—I do hope it ain't so hot in Chicago—used to say so before I got stout."

Adam blew a snake of smoke from his left nostril and surprised her with a whole sentence. He drawled, "Was a oiler on the Nevada that sung a song about pale hands, pink tipped like some kind of a flower, Mamma."

"My gee," said Mrs. Egg, "I know that song! A person sang it at the Presbyterian supper in 1910 when the oysters were bad, and some people thought it wasn't correct for a church party, bein' a pretty passionate kind of song. It was awful popular for a while after that . . . Benjamina would know, her papa havin' kept a music store. I'll ask her. Help me up, lamb."

Adam arose and took his mother kindly out of her chair with one motion. Mrs. Egg passed voluminously over the sill into the kitchen and addressed her superior cook, beaming at the girl.

"There's a sent'mental kind of song that Dammy's interested in which is about some gump lovin' a woman's pale hands beside the shallow Marne or some such place."

Benjamina brushed back her blazing hair with both slender hands and looked at the rosy nails.

She said, "Pale Hands. I think—— No, it's the Kashmir love song. It used to be sung a great deal."

Adam said "Thanks" in the doorway.

Then he turned, jamming the jewel case into his pocket, and lounged down the steps. His shoulders gleamed like oiled wood. He picked a handful of peaches from the basket, which would have burdened two mortals, and split one in his terrible fingers. He ate a peach absently and threw the red stone at a roaming chicken, infamously busy in the nas-

turtiums. Mrs. Egg leaned on the side of the door. A slight nervousness made her reach for the radishes which Benjamina was cleaning. Radishes always stimulated Mrs. Egg. She ate two and hoped that Edith Sims wouldn't happen to look at Adam's back. The undershirt revealed both shoulder blades and most of the sentiment "Damn Kaiser Bill" tattooed in pink across Adam. It seemed indecorous at the moment of betrothal, and Mrs. Egg winced.

Then she wondered. Adam took another peach and pressed it in a cupped hand. Its blood welled over his shoulder and smeared the rear of the shirt brilliantly. He scrubbed it thoroughly into the back of his cropped hair and massaged his flat abdomen with a second fruit. After some study he kicked his feet out of the moccasins and doubled down in his fluid manner to rub his insteps with black grease from the valves of the waiting motorcycle. Then he signalled his contentment with these acts by a prolonged exhalation of smoke from his mouth, gave his mother an inscrutable glance as he tucked the cast moccasins into the fork of the apple tree and fled down the driveway with a coughing of his machine's engine, barefoot, unspeakably soiled and magnificently shimmering with peach blood.

"My gee!" said Mrs. Egg.

Benjamina looked up from the radishes and asked "What did you say?" gravely.

So Mrs. Egg meditated, eating a radish, on the simple pleasure of talking to the admirable girl about this spectacle. Adam had favoured Benjamina with some notice in these ten days, and his approval of her cooking was silently manifest. He had even eaten some veal goulash, a dish which he usually declined. The girl was a lady, anyhow. Mrs. Egg exploded.

"Benjamina, Dammy's up to somethin'! His sisters keep tellin' me he ain't tactful, either! My gee! He simply washed himself in peach juice and went off to give Edith Sims her engagement ring! And left his moc'sins in the apple tree where he always used to put his cigarettes when his papa didn't think he was old enough to smoke. But heaven knows, I can't see that anything ever hurt Dammy! He's always been the neatest boy that ever lived, and had all his clothes made when he was in the Navy. It's perfectly true that he ain't dressed respectable once since he got home.

Mercy, the other day he went in to see Edith in a half a khaki shirt that he'd been usin' to clean the garage floor with!"

Benjamina pared a radish with a flutter of her white fingers and asked, "How long have they been engaged, Mrs. Egg?"

"He had ten days' liberty at Christmas and was home. It perfectly upset me, because Dammy hadn't ever paid any attention to the child. They got engaged at a dance Judge Randolph gave. It was extremely sudden," Mrs. Egg pondered, "although the Simses are very refined folks and Edith's a nice girl. . . . A boy who was four years in the Navy naturally ought to know when he's in love or not. But men do fall in love in the most accidental manner, Benjamina! They don't seem to have any intentions of it. My gee! A man who takes to runnin' after a girl for her money is within my comprehensions, or because she's good-lookin'. But what most men marry most women for is beyond me. I'm forty-six years of age," she said, "but I still get surprised at things. I think I'll lie down. . . . Do you man'cure your nails, or are they as pink as that all the time?"

"They're naturally pink," Benjamina smiled.

"They're awful pretty," Mrs. Egg yawned, pausing in her advance to the door of the living room. Then it seemed guileful to increase this praise. She added "Dammy was sayin' so," and strolled into the living room, where twenty-five photographs of Adam reposed on shelves and tables. She closed the door and stopped to eat a peppermint from the glass urn beside the phonograph's cabinet. Excitements worked in her. She brushed a fly from the picture of Adam in wrestling tights and sank on a vast couch. The leather cushions hissed, breathing out air under her descent. She closed her eyes and brooded. . . . If Adam wanted to annoy Edith Sims, he had chosen a means cleverly. The girl was elaborate as to dress and rather haughty about clothes. She had praised the attire of Judge Randolph's second son before Adam pointedly on Sunday at tea in the veranda. Perturbations and guesses clattered in Mrs. Egg's mind. Then a real clatter in the kitchen roused her.

"I milked three cows," said Hamish Saunders to his sister in a loud and complacent voice.

Benjamina said less loudly but with vigour, "Hamish, you got a post card! I saw you reading it! I told you not to write any one where we'd gone to. Now——"

Mrs. Egg knew that the boy was wiggling. He said, "Oh, I wrote Tick Matthews. He won't tell Cousin Joe, Benjy."

"He'll tell his mother and she'll tell everyone in the building! I didn't want any one to know where we'd gone to!"

Mrs. Egg sat up. In a little, the lad spoke with a sound of male determination. He spoke airily. His hands must be jammed into his pockets. He said, "Now Cousin Joe ain't going to come runnin' down here after us, Benjy. You've gone off, so that ought to sort of show him you ain't going to marry him. I was asking Adam if there's any law that a person's guardian can make 'em live with him if they don't want to——"

"You told him!"

"I did not!"

The girl said, "Don't talk so loud, Hamish! Mrs. Egg's taking a nap upstairs. You told him!"

"I didn't tell him a thing! I said there was a guy I knew that had run off from his guardian and——"

Benjamina burst into queer, vexed laughter. She said, "You might as well have told him! The day he came to the flat he asked who else lived there besides us. Cousin Joe's pipes were all over the place. It——"

"Look here! There's a judge in this town, and Mrs. Egg or Adam would tell him we're not children or imbeciles or nothin'! If Cousin Joe came down here lookin' for us——" Presently he said with misery on each syllable, "Don't cry, Benjy. . . . But nothin'll happen. . . . Anyhow, you'll be twenty-one in October and the court'll give you our income, 'stead of payin' it to Cousin Joe. . . . Bet you a dollar it's more than he says it is!" He whistled seven notes of a bugle call and then whimpered, "Quit cryin', Benjy!"

"F-finish these radishes," Benjamina commanded; "I want to go brush my hair."

There was the light sound of her rubber soles on the back stairs. Mrs. Egg lay down again, wishing that the urn of

peppermints was within reach. In the kitchen Hamish said "Aw, hell!" and the chair by the table creaked as he slumped into it. He would pare radishes very badly in that mood, Mrs. Egg thought.

She now thought of Benjamina with admiration. Adam had seen the girl's name on a list of women willing to take service in the country, at a Cleveland agency. He had gone to interview Benjamina, Mrs. Egg gathered, because a cook on the U. S. S. *Nevada* had been named Saunders and the word looked auspicious. Accident, said Mrs. Egg to herself, was the dominant principle of life. She was much interested. Benjamina had taken proper steps to get away from an unpleasant guardian and should be shielded from any consequences. Certainly a girl who could cook to satisfy Adam wasn't to be given back to some nameless male in Cleveland, in a flat. Mrs. Egg abhorred flats. A man who would coop two children in a flat deserved no pity or consideration. And Adam required gallons of peach butter for winter use. Mrs. Egg arose, stalked openly into the kitchen, and addressed Hamish as an equal. She said, "Bub, you're an awful tactful boy, and have sense. Dammy said so himself. Honesty is my policy, an' I may as well say that I could hear all you were talkin' with Benjamina right now. . . . Who is this Cousin Joe you've run off from?"

Hamish cut a radish in two and wretchedly stammered, "H-he's dad's cousin. He's a louse!"

Mrs. Egg drawled, "My gee! That's a awful good description of your relation! Now, I haven't any intention to lose Benjamina when she's the best cook I ever had, an' you're not as bad at milkin' as you might be. If this person comes down here or makes any fuss I'll see to it that he don't get anywheres. So if Benjamina gets frightened you tell her that I'm goin' to look after this."

"Yes'm," said Hamish.

He looked at Mrs. Egg with an amazed awe that was soothing. She beamed and strolled out of the kitchen. Descending the steps one by one, she came to the level walk of the dooryard and marched along it toward the barns. Egg was taking a holiday with his sister, married to a dyspeptic clergyman in Chicago, and it was her duty to aid Adam by surveying the cows. She entered the barnyard and rounded

the corner of the cows' palace into a group of farm hands bent above a trotting of dice on the clay. Adam looked up from this sport and said "'Lo, Mamma," cheerfully.

"My gee," Mrs. Egg faltered, regarding a pile of silver before his knees, "I never saw you win a cent at any game before, Dammy!"

The giant grinned, cast the dice, and raked three dollars toward him. His eyes were black lights. He announced: "This is my lucky day, Mamma!" and all the worshipful youths chuckled as he stood up. He walked over a Swede's stooped back and dragged Mrs. Egg away from her husband's hirelings. Then he lit a cigarette and consumed half its length in an appalling suction. The smoke jetted from his nostrils in a flood. He patted Mrs. Egg's upper chin with a thumb and said, "She gave me the air, Mamma!"

"What?"

"She told me to fly my kite! She's off me! She's goin' to marry Jim Randolph. It's all flooie. . . . I'd like a tub of champagne an' five fried hens for supper! Mamma," said Adam, "I ain't engaged to that girl any more!" Therewith he took all the silver from his pocket and sent it whirling in a gay, chiming shower up the roof of the cow barn. His teeth flashed between his parted lips and dimples invaded his brown cheeks. He swung his arms restlessly and his mother thought that he would break into a dance. Adam reflected, "It's hell what happens by accident, Mamma. Was a bowl of punch in the lib'ry at that dance of Judge Randolph's Christmastime that'd knock the teeth out of a wildcat. Had six cups. Saw this girl's hand hangin' over the banisters when I was headin' for the front door. I kissed it. Mamma, there ain't any way of tellin' a nice girl that you don't mean anything when you kiss her. They don't understand it."

A devastating admiration of her child made Mrs. Egg's heart cavort. His manners were sublime. He lit another cigarette and stated, "Well, that's all of that." Then, wearied with much speech, he was still.

"Mercy, Dammy! This is an awful relief! Your sisters have been holdin' forth about Edith Sims bein' much more refined than God all afternoon. I was gettin' kind of scared of her. . . . What's that phonograph plate, lamb?"

Adam didn't answer, but ripped the envelope from the

grained disk, and Mrs. Egg saw, on the advertising, "Kashmiri Song." But her thoughts had sunk to a profound and cooling peace; there would be no more Edith Sims. She drawled, "Edith's pretty awful sedate, Dammy. I don't think she'd have the sand to run off from—a person she didn't like, or make her own livin'."

The giant flung up his arms and made certain gestures. Hamish Saunders came hurtling from the house for orders. Adam said, "Go get me some clothes, kid—white. And shoes'n a cake of soap. Then come swimmin'. Put this plate with the rest. Hustle!" He ground his nose with a fist, staring after the boy, then said, "Nice kid, Mamma."

"Mercy, yes, Dammy! Dammy, it's pretty ridiculous to have Benjamina and the boy eat in the kitchen, and it takes tact to keep a nice girl like that contented. I think they'd better take their meals with us, sweetheart."

He nodded and strode off among the regular files of apple and pear trees toward the aimless riverlet that watered the farm. Mrs. Egg felt hunger stir in her bulk. She plucked an apple leaf and chewed, marching up the walk, its fragrant pulp. Benjamina was soberly chopping the chickens for dinner into convenient bits.

Mrs. Egg applauded her performance, saying, "We'd better have 'em fried, I think. Dammy prefers it. And when you've got time you might go get one of those very big green bottles of pear cider down in the cellar, honey. It's awful explosive stuff and Hamish hadn't better drink any. And lay the table for four, because it's pretty lonely for Dammy eatin' with me steadily. . . . Edith Sims busted their engagement this afternoon, by the way, though it isn't at all important."

"Isn't it?"

Mrs. Egg refreshed herself with a bit of cracker from the table and drawled, "Not a bit, deary. I've never heard of anybody's heart breakin' under the age of thirty over a busted engagement. Dammy's pretty much relieved, though too polite to say so, and Edith'll marry Judge Randolph's second boy, who's a very nice kid and has curly hair, although his teeth stick out some. So it don't seem to matter except to my daughters, who'll want Dammy to go into full mourning and die of sorrow. They're tearful girls, but nice. Let me

show you how Dammy likes tomatoes fried when they're done with the chicken."

"Mrs. Egg," said Benjamina, "you're—a remarkable person." The slim, pale fingers twisted themselves against her dull blue frock into the likeness of a frightened white moth. She went on, "You—you never get excited."

"My gee! I haven't any patience with excitement, Benjamina. Things either go right or they go wrong. In either case, it's no good foamin' at the mouth and tryin' to kick the roof off. I'm like Dammy. I prefer to be calm," said Mrs. Egg. "As for scatterin' rays of sunshine like a Sunday-school hymn, most people don't thank any one to do so—nor me, when I have indigestion."

"I—I feel much calmer since I've been here," Benjamina said. "It was so hot in the flat in Cleveland, and noisy. And it's very kind of you to ask Hamish and me to eat with you and Mr. Egg."

Her hands had become steadfast. She smiled a little.

"It'll be much more sociable, honey," Mrs. Egg reflected. "Even if Dammy don't talk, he likes company, havin' been in the Navy where he had lots. . . . Where's the biscuit flour? There's time to make some before supper."

The kitchen dimmed and Benjamina's tall body dulled into a restful shadow. She moved without noise and her pleasant voice was low. Mrs. Egg devised biscuits in comfort and smelled Adam's cigarettes in the living room. Hamish came to stimulate the making of this meal by getting his large feet in the way, and Mrs. Egg was scolding him tranquilly when the phonograph loosed a series of lazy notes. Then it sang, fervidly, of pale hands that it had loved beside some strange name.

"It's that Kashmir business," said Mrs. Egg. "Open the door, bub, so's we can hear."

The music swelled as the door opened and a circle of smoke eddied into the kitchen. Mrs. Egg saw Adam as a white pillar in the gloom. The machine sobbed "Where are you now? Where are you now?" with an oily sadness.

"Real touching," Mrs. Egg mentioned.

A crashing of the orchestra intervened. Then the voice cried, "Pale hands, pink tipped, like lotus flowers that——" The words jumbled into sounds. Mrs. Egg hungrily yawned.

The tenor wailed, "I would have rather felt you on my throat, crushing out life, than waving me farewell!" and the girl stirred beside the doorway, her hands in motion. The song expired with a thin noise of violins. Adam stopped the plate. An inexplicable silence filled the house, as if this stale old melody had wakened something that listened. Then Adam lit a cigarette.

"Supper near ready, Mamma?"

"Pretty near, lamb," said Mrs. Egg.

Supper was pleasant. Hamish talked buoyantly of cows. He was impressed by their stupidity and their artless qualities. Benjamina gazed at the four candles with gray eyes and smiled at nothing. Adam ate fourteen hot biscuits and three mounds of an ice cream that held fresh raspberries. He stared at the ceiling gravely, and his white shirt tightened as he breathed out the first smoke above a cup of coffee.

Then he said, "We'll go to the movies. Get your hat, Miss Saunders."

"But the dishes aren't washed!" Benjamina exclaimed.

"The kid and I'll wash 'em," Adam vouchsafed.

Mrs. Egg yawned, "Go ahead, Benjamina," and watched the girl's hands flutter as she left the green dining room.

Adam blew a ring of smoke, which drooped, dissolving about a candle. He reached across the table for the coffeepot and filled his cup, then looked at Hamish.

"What's she scared of, kid?"

"Cousin Joe," said Hamish presently. "He's—our guardian—wants to marry her. Y'see, we have some money from dad's store. Cousin Joe's a lawyer and the bank pays him the money."

"Lived with him in Cleveland?"

Hamish groaned, "You saw where we lived! Benjy couldn't keep the place lookin' decent. He knocked his pipe out wherever he sat. But Benjy'll be twenty-one in October and the bank'll pay her the money."

"An' this Joe's a sour plum?"

"Well," said Hamish, with the manner of last justice, "he can sing pretty well."

Mrs. Egg was thinking of bed at ten o'clock when the telephone rang and the anguished voice of her youngest daughter came pouring from Ilium:

"Mamma! Dammy's got that girl in a box at the movies!"

"I'm glad," said Mrs. Egg, "that they're sitting in a box. My gee! It's hot as I ever felt it for this time of year, Fern! Benjamina's such a large person that she——"

"Oh, Mamma! And it's all over town that Edith Sims is going to marry——"

"I can't pretend that I'm either surprised or sorry, Fern. As for Dammy marryin' a girl he would have to stoop over a yard to kiss after breakfast, it never seemed a just kind of arrangement to me, although I didn't want to criticize her. The Simses are nice folks—awful refined. Mercy, but don't Dammy look well in white pants?"

"Mamma! You simply haven't any heart!"

"I'll be forty-seven in December, Fern," said Mrs. Egg. "Good-night."

She drowsily ascended to her cool bedroom, where a vacuum flask of iced lemonade stood with a package of oatmeal crackers on the bedside table. In the dark she lay listening to the obliging wind that now moved in the ten acres of orchard, and sometimes she chuckled, nibbling a cracker. Finally she slept, and was wakened by Adam's voice.

"Was it a nice picture, Dammy?"

"Fair. Where's that law dictionary Dad got last year, Mamma?"

"It's in the pantry, under the paraffin for the preserves, sweetheart."

"Thanks," said Adam, and his feet went softly away.

Mrs. Egg resumed her slumbers composedly, and woke on the first clash of milk pails in the barnyard. Day was clear. Adam could get in the rest of the peaches and paint the garage roof without discomfort. She ate a cracker, dressing, and went down the back stairs to find Benjamina grinding coffee in a white, fresh gown that showed gentle colour in her cheeks.

"Mercy," said Mrs. Egg, "but you're up real early!"

"I don't think it can be very healthy for Mr. Egg and Hamish to wait so long for breakfast," the girl said.

"The men's cook down at the bunk house always has coffee for Dammy. It's a sad time that Dammy can't get himself a meal around here, honey. But it's nice to have breakfast early. I think he's hungriest in the mornin'."

"Isn't he always hungry?"

"Always," Mrs. Egg assured her happily, beginning to pare chilled peaches; "and he likes your oatmeal, I notice. Bein' Scotch by descent, you understand the stuff. You've been here ten days, and it's remarkable how you've learned what Dammy likes. If he was talkative it wouldn't take so much intelligence. A very good way is to watch his toes. If they move he likes what he's eatin'. My gee! It was easy to tell when he was little and went barefooted. He's too tactful to complain about anything."

"He said, driving down from Cleveland, that he hated talking much," Benjamina murmured.

Adam's black head showed above his blue milking shirt in the barnyard. Mrs. Egg watched the tall girl's gray eyes quicken as she gazed down the wet grass. Morning mist fairly smoked from the turf and the boles of apple trees were moist. Hamish was lugging pails to the dairy valiantly.

"The high school here," said Mrs. Egg, "is very good for the size of the town, and Hamish will be perfectly comfortable in winters. You mustn't be alarmed by my husband when he comes back from Chicago. It's a nervous habit he has of winkin' his left eye. It don't mean a thing. I'm tryin' to get hold of some girl that's reasonably intell'gent to do waitin' on table and dusting, which is not good for your hands."

"It's very nice here," Benjamina said, still looking at the barnyard.

Mrs. Egg decided that she was a beautiful creature. Her colour improved breath by breath, and her face had the look of a goddess on a coin. The vast woman ate a peach and inspected this virgin hopefully. Then the pale hands shot to Benjamina's throat and she whirled from the window. Hamish tumbled through the door, his shoes smeared with milk and his mouth dragged into a gash of fright.

He gulped, "It's Cousin Joe! He's gettin' out of a buggy at the gate!"

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Egg.

She rose and walked into the veranda, smoothing her hair. The man limping up from the white gates was tall and his shoulders seemed broad. He leaned on a cane. He wore a hat made of rough rings of straw. Mrs. Egg greatly disliked him at once, and went down the steps slowly, side-

ways. Adam was lounging up from the barnyard and some farm hands followed him in a clump of tanned faces. The light made their eyes flash. The woman sighed. There might be a deal of angry talk before she got rid of the lame person in black. He advanced, and she awaited him under the apple tree below the steps. When he approached she saw that his hair was dull brown and sleek as he took off his hat.

"Mrs. Egg?"

"I am," said Mrs. Egg.

The man smoothly bowed. He was less than six feet tall, but burly and not pale. His mouth smiled charmingly. He glanced at Adam, smoking on the steps, and twirled the cane in his hand. He said, "My name's Hume. I'm an attorney. I'm the guardian of Benjamina and Hamish Saunders, my cousin's children. They're here, I understand?"

"I understand," Mrs. Egg drawled, "that you ain't much of a guardian, and they're better off here."

Adam's voice came over her shoulder, "They're goin' to stay here."

Cold sweat rose in Mrs. Egg's clenched hands. She turned and saw Adam's nostrils rigid, yellow on his bronze face. She said, "Go in to breakfast, Dammy. I'm talkin' to this person."

Adam might lose his temper. He must go away. She looked at him for a moment, and the farm hands made new shadows on the turf, approaching curiously. Then Adam turned and walked into the kitchen.

"We're wasting time," the man observed, always smoothly. "Benjy's my ward and she's going back to Cleveland with me."

"I don't see as that follows, precisely," Mrs. Egg panted.

"The nearest justice would."

"Then you'd better get the nearest justice to say it," said Mrs. Egg, "because Benjamina's perfectly well off here. As for sendin' her back to Cleveland for you to make love at in a flat—my gee!"

She felt herself impolitic and tactless in saying this, but rage had mounted. Her chins were shaking. The man's clothes smelled of pipe smoke. His collar wasn't clean. He was a dog. The kitchen door slammed. She dreaded that

Adam might lose his temper and thrash this fellow. The man looked over her head.

"Here," said Adam, "get out the way, Mamma, please! Let's settle this! Come ahead, Benj'mina. He can't hurt you." He was leading the girl down the steps by a hand. Smoke welled from his nostrils and his eyes had partly shut. He brought the white girl to face her cousin and said, "Now! My name's Adam Egg. Benjamina's married to me. Show him your rings, kid."

The farm hands gasped and an Irish lad whooped. Adam undid his brown fingers from the pale hand. The big diamond and the circlet of little stones blazed below the rosy nails. Mrs. Egg put her palm on her mouth and a scream was a pain in her throat. She hadn't seen Adam married! He threw away the cigarette by a red motion of his tongue and drawled, "Go back in the house, kid!"

The man clamped a hand on his cane and said "Without my permission!"

"She's twenty," Adam grunted, his shoulders tremulous under the thin blue shirt, "so what you goin' to do?"

Then nothing happened. Benjamina walked up the steps and stood with an arm about Hamish at the top. A farm hand lit a pipe. Mrs. Egg's heart beat horribly with the pain of having missed Adam's wedding. The man's face was getting green. He was odious, completely. He said, "Their property stays in my control!"

"To hell with their property!"

Nothing happened. The man stood poking his cane into the turf and turning the thick end among grass blades. Hamish came down one step. Then the man backed and whirled up his cane.

Mrs. Egg shrieked "Dammy!" and bruised her lip with her teeth.

The heavy cane seemed to balance a long while against the sun. Adam stood. The thing fell across his right shoulder and broke with a cracking sound. The blue shirt tore and Benjamina screamed. Adam's whole length shook and his lips were gray for a second. He slung out both hands and caught the fellow's throat. He said, "Now! You've 'saulted me with a dangerous weapon, see? Now, get out of here! Here's your witnesses! You hit me! All I've got

to do is walk you in to a judge and you'll get a year, see? That's law! Get out of this! I could kill you," he drawled, "an' I will if you ain't out the gates in one minute!"

His shoulders heaved. The shirt split down his back The man went spinning in a queer rotation along the grass, like some collapsing toy. Adam stood with his hands raised, watching. The figure stumbled twice. Then it lurched toward the white gates in a full run, and the farm hands yelled. Adam dropped his hands and ripped the shirt from his shoulder. A band of scarlet had risen on the bronze of his chest. He said thickly, "Damn if he ain't a husky! Hey, Hamish, get me some iodine, will you?"

Benjamina ran down the steps and dragged the rings from her fingers. She babbled, "Oh! Oh, Adam! What did you let him strike you for? I'm so sorry!" She thrust the rings into one of his palms and cried, "You shouldn't have let him hit you! He's so strong!"

"What was I goin' to say if he said to show any weddin' certificate? If he hit me it was assault, an' I could get rid of him."

Mrs. Egg wailed, "Then you ain't married, Dammy?"

"No."

Adam leaned on the apple tree and stared at Benjamina, turning the rings in his hand. After a moment the girl flushed and walked away into the orchard of rustling boughs. A morning wind made the giant's torn shirt flap. He sent his eyes to the gaping hired men and drawled "What about those cows?"

Feet thudded off on the grass. Hamish came bounding down the steps with a bottle of iodine and a handkerchief.

"My gee, Dammy," said Mrs. Egg, grasping the bottle, "if your sisters have the nerve to say you're tactless after this I'll—— Sit down, lamb! Oh, Dammy, how can you think as fast as that?"

Adam lit a cigarette and blew smoke through his nostrils. His face was again blank and undisturbed. He asked "Peaches for breakfast?" absently.

"Anything you want, lamb! Benjamina has oatmeal ready."

He clicked the rings in his hand and his feet wriggled in the moccasins. Then he said "Mamma," strangely.

"Yes, Dammy."

"Mamma, I've put Miss Saunders in a hell of a position sayin' we're married."

"That's so, Dammy. It'll be all over town in no time."

Adam arose from the grass and examined his mother for a whole minute. His nostrils shook somewhat. He took the engagement ring from one palm and handed it to Hamish, ordering, "Kid, you go take that to your sister and tell her it's with my compliments. I hate talkin'."

The boy's red hair went flashing under the trees. Mrs. Egg watched him halt by his sister, who was wiping her eyes beside a trunk. They conferred. Soon Hamish turned about and began to make swift signs with his arms.

Adam said, "Good enough. . . . I guess I'll call her Ben." He lit his next cigarette and walked up the steps.

Mrs. Egg screamed, "Dammy! Ain't you goin' to go kiss her?"

Adam's eyes opened on his mother in alarm.

He said, "I'm thirsty, Mamma. And I've got to get a fresh shirt. Couldn't kiss anybody in this one. It wouldn't be polite."

Then he waved his cigarette to his new love and slammed the kitchen door behind him.

THE KISS OF THE ACCOLADE

By JAMES W. BENNETT

From *Short Stories*

THE daily launch from Papeëte was yet a winking speck in the distance, bright sunlight rebounding from its polished brass-work. That glitter was a signal; the native women began to gather, as they always did when a boat of any size arrived. Their magpie chatter rose on the quiet morning air.

I was excitedly chewing the end of a Batavian cheroot, and keeping my eyes glued upon the launch. A moment later I sighed with relief, for I saw a tall, white-clad individual standing at the bow. A breech-clouted Polynesian snubbed a rope around a stanchion, and the lone passenger stepped forth.

"My name is Manwaring," he began, "Augustus Lee Manwaring. I am the new American consul for Moröea——"

"Exactly," I interrupted, smiling. "I've been expecting you, although——"

But apparently the passenger was not to be deterred. He tossed back a lock of tangled black hair with a redundant, statesmanlike gesture, and launched into a speech. The speech was long and prosy, filled with rodomontade. It was in vivid contrast with the palpable youth of the speaker: the gawky, boyish arms, the awkward posturing.

My smile must have grown fixed as I listened. The morning was hot, and that particular point was in the broiling sunlight. A ripple of merriment came from the circle of Moröean women. I turned with a frown. Their faces grew preternaturally sober; then one peal of laughter rose uncontrollably.

"Miss Adorée," I said sharply in Tahitian, "thou wilt leave at once! Else I instruct thy father to punish thee!"

The girl who had been admonished pouted a pretty mouth at me. "I do not wish to remain, anyway, thou cross old white man!" Nevertheless, she reluctantly moved away from the circle.

But to all the byplay Manwaring seemed indifferent. Evidently he had memorized that oration on the ship coming down to Tahiti. Although his eyes were mirroring a decided disappointment that he was being met by a masculine committee of one, he was not to be deterred from his speech.

There was a certain poetic justice in the fact that I was the committee of one. If I hadn't grown lonely—absurdly lonely for a man of my years—and if one Raoul Laverne hadn't been such an unmitigated rascal, Augustus Lee might still have been in his small Carolina town waiting for his appointment.

Laverne had been the American consular agent for Moröea. I had caught him in the act of copying my consular invoices, presumably for the benefit of the Fayette Frères, a French firm in Tahiti. I had been suspecting the man for a long time; the Fayette Frères had been outbidding me too steadily in the San Francisco copra market.

Yes, I was lonely. Laverne was the only other white man in Moröea. To speak of him as white, was to give him the benefit of a lot of doubt. His skin was a fairly lively *colorado maduro*, and he was said to be at least one quarter Polynesian. When I came upon him red-handedly juggling my invoices, I was given a practical peg whereon to hang my loneliness.

I took up the matter with Winthrop, the consul at Papeëte. Also I spoke vaguely to him of new steamship lines and increase of export, topping off my remarks with the pointed suggestion that Moröea be given a bona-fide American consul instead of a consular agent of Laverne's stamp.

It must have been the first problem of any importance that had come before Winthrop for months. He must have worked on it tooth-and-nail; for Manwaring descended upon me a quarter of a year later, a painted plaque, displaying the consular coat-of-arms slung over his shoulder, and his commission in his trunk.

The second evening after his arrival Manwaring came to call upon me. It was the "official" consular visit. I watched him, from my lanaii, as he stalked up that hot

stretch of beach. He was in full evening regalia: silk hat, gold-headed cane, and a black dress-coat with the longest tails I had ever seen. He was followed by a straggling procession of naked native children, but he paid not the slightest heed to their catcalls.

When he arrived, his face was dripping and his mouth looked drawn. I rushed him a cool drink and suggested hurriedly that he divest himself of that black coat. He made no verbal reply to my suggestion, but his face was answer enough. An American consul without his coat!

The lemon-squash apparently relieved him. Also I set a native boy to fanning vigorously with a punkah that I had imported from India.

I brought out the cigars and cocktails a few moments later. He blinked at the cocktail mixer, but nonchalantly reached for his glass and raised it to his lips. The next instant he was coughing and sputtering.

"Good lord, man!" I expostulated. "Haven't you ever drunk that stuff before?"

"No!" came a hoarse, strangled whisper.

"Well, if you're a teetotaler, don't let me start you on——"

"Must, Mr. Thayler!" he gurgled. "Mustn't ever—offend one's host—by refusing!"

"My son," I admired, "I see a great future before you! I believe you're going to be a perfect consul!"

He took the compliment calmly, apparently ignoring any latent irony that might have been found in my words. I attempted to get him to talk about himself, but, in spite of that bombastic way he had of discussing affairs in general, he was more or less reticent. After a space though, and by dint of more or less adroit questioning on my part, he gave me smatterings of his life in his drawling, formal way.

He had always hankered after a career of diplomacy, and had studied international law almost since he could remember. He was the only son of a doting mother, who apparently had fostered in him the penchant for after-dinner speech. With the exception of two years of college, his life had been spent in his native Carolina village. He had dreams of a big consul generalship, sometime, somewhere. Then he launched into a long diatribe about the grasping qualities of American firms who did the vampire act on innocent islands—"Sucking

their life-blood!" (Flourish.) "And, by gad, sir, I'm here to stop it!" (Another flourish.)

I listened; I didn't set him right. He was so pitiably young, and it was his first post.

He fell silent, and we both sat for several minutes gazing over the glistening stretch of sandy beach. Even as we looked, the moon flooded over the crest of the island like a dammed-in lake that had broken all barriers. It made a wide path of gold over the quiet waters of the harbour. I had spent thirty of my fifty years in the tropics, but I never tired of the necromancy of a South Sea night. Even my cigar smoke made silver whorls in the soft light.

I half turned to catch Manwaring's profile, and I was conscious of a boyish, eager expression in his eyes. It nullified completely the blasting effect of that long diatribe. The eyes were warm and friendly and seeking; they seemed to say, "Pshaw, all these fulminations of mine are very fine. But, really, I'm only a bewildered youngster, and I'm just a bit worried and nervous over it all."

Manwaring stirred as I leaned forward and reached for another cigar.

"By the by," he began, with that awkward flourish of the hand, "an individual—Laverne—he proffered a request that he be permitted to see your invoices this morning. I believe the fellow even hinted at a—a sort of bribery. I was forced, sir, to trundle him from the consulate. I relieved him of a short but ugly-appearing knife——"

"You did? Well, bully for you, Mr. Manwaring!"

"There is no cause for congratulation, sir. It was most unpleasant, but—ah—necessary."

Laverne was a large and powerfully built man, I knew. I stared now, with newly opened eyes, at the muscles bulging beneath that terrible-fitting black coat of Manwaring's. And there he sat, far into the night, gently perspiring, his eyes peering eagerly forth, as though seeking the answer to the riddle of life in this out-of-the-way end of the earth.

Manwaring ushered me into his office the next morning with his usual pompous formality. I dumped a sheaf of invoices on to his desk for a consular *chop*. He gave them a hopeful glance. They would mean work! But after that

first hopeful flush subsided, he stared at me bleakly. I knew what that look meant. He was already beginning to realize that the Department of State had handed him the prize lime in their citrus crop for consuls.

"Mr. Thayler," he began mournfully, "I think I've made out every report demanded in the 'General Instructions Circulars' and the 'Regulations.' 'Mines?' We haven't any! 'Schools?' Ditto! 'Manufacturing Plants?' The same!" He laughed, but without much humour in the sound. "Why —why, this place doesn't need a consul! It——"

"Oh, yes, it does!" I interposed hastily. The thought that my invoices would go, unobserved, to the place they belonged—well, the thought made me selfishly blind to the incontrovertible truth of Manwaring's statements. "Besides," I continued, with an effort to be optimistic, "something special may come up——"

"What?" he demanded eagerly.

"Oh, stranded seamen." I probed a vague memory. "Or barratry, or a—a marine survey."

"I'm afraid I won't be accorded any such good fortune. But"—Manwaring turned toward his desk—"there's something here I want to ask you about. I received this an hour or so ago. I think it was supposed to be by a special messenger; at least the boy wasn't as naked as they usually are. He actually was wearing a pair of trousers!"

Manwaring handed me a letter written on lavender stationery. It was in French. I translated:

Cher monsieur le consul:

I have the extreme and undivided honour of requesting your esteemed presence at dinner this evening. I have the magnificent desire to present to you, at such a time, my consort, Jeanne. Also, my daughter, the Princess Adorée.

Trusting that you enjoy the excellence of great health, I have the honour to be, sir,

With greatest sincerity,
KUNALULANKO, *Rex.*

Manwaring could hardly wait until I had finished. "Who are these people? And the 'Rex'? Frankly, Mr. Thayler, I shall have to depend upon you. What recognition should I give them?"

I laughed. "I don't know where Kuna picked up that

signature. In a way, I suppose he has a right to use it. He's the native prince of Moröea. Jeanne, his wife, is about three hundred pounds of French woman. And his daughter——" I laughed again. "Beware!"

Manwaring didn't seem to appreciate my levity. "What's the matter with the daughter?" he queried a bit tartly.

"Nothing, my son, except that she's considered dangerous. She wears a string of broken hearts, native and white. Her most bizarre charm seems to be that she dances the old, real, Tahitian hula—not the importation for the tourist. By the way, you must have seen her; she was down on the beach the day you arrived. But you were so busy with that speech of yours."

He flushed a little at my words. He must have realized by now how absurd that speech of his had been.

"I'm wondering," he asked hesitatingly, "should I accept this invitation?"

"Well, I only know that Winthrop, your *confrère* at Papeëte, has been over—a couple of times, I believe—since I came here year before last."

"That settles it!" Manwaring sighed in evident relief. Royalty was royalty! A dinner in his honour, given by a "Rex," must have seemed to approximate a few of these bombastic dreams that were circling around so visibly in his head.

I returned home and found a similar note from Kuna. The prince was foreman of my native gang, but I decided that my dignity as employer could go hang for one night.

We arrived at seven-thirty, Manwaring in white dress-clothes now. I had prevailed upon him to commission a Chinese tailor at Papeëte—who would fashion a suit of any description in six hours.

Manwaring received his first jolt when he saw the habitation of the prince, for Kuna lived in the usual native hut of bamboo and thatched palm. He did not realize that it was larger, however, than the other huts of the village, and was lighted by several swinging smoky lamps, a decided touch of modernity. Manwaring swallowed twice and resolutely entered.

The chief, barefoot, but dressed in whites, welcomed us volubly in French, and introduced his Gargantuan wife. Jeanne smirked a greeting, but, as Manwaring stood before

her, she made no effort to get to her feet. One always envisaged derricks when thinking of Jeanne rising. Her white, slightly greasy face and blonde hair made her appearance seem odd in that room filled with natives; for the dukes and lords and other members of the royal entourage were present in solid array.

Adorée, the princess, sat modestly at the back of the room, waiting until her father should bring the consul to her for an introduction. Then she raised herself lithely and curtsied in the old Victorian style.

I was watching Manwaring closely as he met her. I looked for an expression of surprise, and I found it. His mouth formed the letter "O," and his breath caught. He seemed to regain his poise, then, and he bowed very gravely. Older men than Manwaring had been bowled over by the beauty of Adorée. The echo of it had reached me, even at Raratonga, more than two years before.

From Jeanne, the French mother, she had been given a wavy mass of hair, lighter in colour than that of her native kinswomen, eyes of a deep violet blue, and a smile that was a pure coquetry. Yet from Kuna came the lyric, graceful figure, that deliberate grace which is the heritage of generations of lotus-eaters. The wonder of it was that she could give this impression of beauty, for she was clad in the horrible "Mother Hubbard" dress that Polynesian women always don when they wish to be in their "company best."

We met the rest of the guests and finally were seated, cross-legged, on fibre mats while the feast was spread before us.

Once Manwaring glanced at me with a look of reproach, but he played his part faultlessly. He could not have been more gracious, in his absurdly stilted way, if he had been dining with European royalty.

As the inevitable roast pig was brought in, I heard a grunting noise, as a live pig thrust his snout under my arm.

"Hi!" I shouted. "Get out!" Somehow, I had never been able to accustom myself to dining, *au naturel*, with the porcine members of a native family. Manwaring stared at me, saw the pig, and his eyes glazed. "Now, young man," I apostrophized inwardly, "if you can stand that blow, you're a real diplomat!"

He stood it nobly.

Kuna clapped his hands; a servant appeared, and the pig was driven forth squealing. Chickens, live fowls, also joined the party, but these we tactfully ignored.

Vintage champagne was served. That Continental wine always puts in its incongruous appearance at Tahitian *luaus*. Manwaring sipped courageously from his glass, as he had done the night before at my quarters. He made a subtle pretense, also, at eating the raw prawns and sea-urchins.

As the débris of the feast was being cleared away Kuna brought in some fifty singers, and we prepared to listen to the "hymenies."

It is difficult to describe this music; there is such a haunting beauty about it that inwardly I find an absurd lump in my throat. The natives chant sagas of the South Seas, stories of the Island gods, always in a vibrant minor key. The total effect is something like that of a symphony orchestra. The only instruments used are dull-toned skin drums. The resonant bigness is attained solely by the human voice. Heard from a distance the hymenies are inevitably mistaken for orchestral music.

The singing continued for an hour, while I leaned against the side wall of the hut dreaming and smoking. But, as I listened, the tempo of the music quickened. The singers in the centre of the hut moved back, and Adorée swung into the open space. She had doffed her atrocious Mother Hubbard, and stood poised before us garbed in a single gaudy *pareau* cloth of splotched purple and red.

Then she began to dance. I had seen the Tahitian and Samoan hulas, performed by the greatest on the Islands, but never before had I witnessed such a dance as on this night. She moved slowly at first, and then with an ever-increasing tempo. She was like the spirit of the island. The languor the fire, the sensuousness of the South Seas, was in her swaying figure. There was a beauty about the dance that spelled madness.

Her eyes, from the very start, were upon Manwaring. She was dancing for him, yet her outstretched arms seemed to be reaching caressingly, pleadingly, toward the rest of us, all inclusive. I shrugged my shoulders, tried to break the spell, and succeeded to the extent that I began to feel a presentiment of trouble. I knew how the dance would end, and I was afraid.

I turned toward Manwaring. He was standing, leaning against the side wall, his face a complete puzzle. At first I thought I detected repugnance, for parts of the dance were as elemental as Nature herself. Then I could see he was being swept away by the barbaric thrill of the music, that quick, blood-tingling chant, that fast thud-thud of the drums, and by the flashing movement of Adorée's body as she swayed and circled.

She reached her crescendo, whirling madly. She uttered a low, moaning cry, a call, and rushed to Manwaring. The next instant her body was pressed tightly against his; her arms were about him, and her lips were lifted for the kiss that must be given. It was the finale of the Tahitian hula. The kiss was the accolade, the reward of the dance.

I cursed feebly. I should have warned Manwaring of this; for if he failed to give the kiss he offered her the unforgivable insult. But my fears of the moment were unfounded. He bent gravely and kissed her full upon the lips.

Adorée gave a happy sigh and moved demurely away, flashing a smile at my gray head as I spoke a word of praise. Manwaring was gazing after her with eyes that were lighted with strange and smouldering fires. They were not the eager, questioning eyes of the boy who had stepped so jauntily from the launch a scant half-week before. And, as we walked home that night, he enveloped himself in a brooding silence.

An off-scheduled ship was due to put into port that next week. Ships always meant an unholy spurt of work from my men and equally severe labour on my part. The second day following Kuna's *luau* I was running around in circles, damning a native *compradore* for an incomplete list, losing my temper, and otherwise blowing off steam.

That was the morning, unfortunately, on which Manwaring chose to pay me a visit. He wandered over to my office, walking with the drooping, aimless saunter which told its own story. Undoubtedly he had been goaded into coming by thoughts of that hot, whitewashed consular office of his.

The day was sickeningly warm, and my disposition was sloppping and sizzling with little blister marks as I turned and snapped at him, "Well, what do you want, Manwaring?"

He stared at me in surprise, and then replied a bit haltingly, "Ah—ah, I was just passing, just passing by here."

"Now, I'm sorry, but you mustn't bother me. The *Elmira Stokes* is due in port next Monday. I've got to kick a cargo into shape for her." And out I bustled. Then, I confess, I forgot him totally and completely.

When I rushed back to my office, two hours later, he was still sitting there. He rose with a flourish, gave me one of his bleak glances, and his eyes seemed to have grown immeasurably colder.

"Sir, I shall bid you good morning. I regret that I've troubled you. I have only waited in order to make my farewell——"

"What nonsense, Manwaring! Now, why did you do that? There was no need of your waiting! I'm just as busy as the very devil to-day!"

He bowed very low at this and stalked out. I glanced for an instant at that uncompromising back of his as he went rigidly down the beach toward the lonely consulate. How like him it was to wait half a morning in order to make a courteous exit!

Of course, I should have gone over to his house that day and patched things up; for I knew the tropics, and I knew the probable consequences if I failed to act. Tempers here are always at a nasty tinder heat; and slights, brooded over, have a habit of suddenly growing mountain-high. Manwaring couldn't throw himself into work, as I could, and forget his slights, fancied or otherwise. All that remained for him was to sit and try to read his trade reports. And who can read when the thermometer registers a dripping-damp ninety-four day after day?

But I didn't see Manwaring. My good intentions were buried under an avalanche of work, eighteen hours a day of it. Friday of that week whirled around before I found time to visit him—and then it was too late. I was received with a hopelessly rigid formality.

He saw the documents under my arm, and he spoke with the measured tone of a judge pronouncing sentence. I decided that he was pronouncing sentence—upon our friendship.

"If you will place the invoices on the table, sir, I shall take them up at my earliest convenience."

"But, Manwaring, I'd like them attended to right away."

"They will be completed in sufficient time."

"But——"

"I repeat, they will be completed in sufficient time."

Then my own temper boiled over. "Hell, man, what's the matter with you?"

He made no reply to this. Instead, he gave me a cold, level stare.

I grabbed my hat and moved hurriedly toward the door. I didn't dare trust myself to further speech. And, as I quick-stepped it home, I told myself angrily, "I'll let that young fool strictly alone for a time, till he can come to his senses!"

After I'd cooled down a bit I began to feel almighty sorry for Manwaring. I realized how this sudden shift in affairs must be knocking every prop from under him. I had been the only person he could approach for advice, the only companion during the long, quiet evenings.

Whatever he felt, he made no move toward capitulation. During the entire fortnight which followed, even when the *Elmira Stokes* had come and departed, he did not set foot inside my door. He carried things so far as to return my copy of the invoices by messenger.

I waited and I waited, and then, after still a third week had been marked off my calendar, I decided one evening to take matters into my own hands, even at the risk of a second rebuff. Once this decision was made, I hurried through my dinner and walked briskly toward the consulate.

As I neared the building I saw the figure of a woman, clad in white, coming from the opposite direction. There was something furtive about her movements, and I stopped and watched her. She hurried, with several side glances, toward the door of the consulate. After a moment's hesitation there she entered without ringing the bell.

I took an impulsive step forward and then I checked myself. Decidedly, this was no time for ill-considered action. I would have to do some real thinking before I plunged into that building.

The consulate was located on a slight rise above the beach, and Manwaring had dragged a bench, evidently from his kitchen, on to a little knoll at the left of the house. I sat down there and tried to work out the situation clearly. The whole thing had an ugly look—Manwaring and a native woman! He was the American consul; he couldn't afford

such an affair. I would be a poor sort of friend if I failed to interfere. Yet the very difficulty of my task appalled me. I began to hesitate, to try and formulate the sort of speech that I must make.

The evening was quiet. White spurts of spray rose and fell on the near horizon, as wave after wave dashed madly against the coral reef. The night wind sighed redolently in the feathered tops of the palms. Spice and wild-orange blossom—— Then the strain of those past weeks proved too much for me. Even the troubles of Manwaring grew misty-dim. I fell into a doze.

I awoke with something of a start. That same figure had left the consulate and was moving in my direction. I sat very still. She was looking out over the harbour as she went, and did not see me. I might have guessed; it was Adorée.

My first thought was to stop her. Then I decided that I must wait. Perhaps it had only been a chance visit. My accusation was of too grave a nature to be unsubstantiated. If she went to Manwaring's the next evening, I would plump my unwelcome self down there while they were together.

I spent the day fuming, worrying, and smoking more than was good for me. But by nightfall I was firmly decided upon my course of action.

Again I loitered outside the consulate, hoping against hope. It was nearly an hour before Adorée appeared. But the very sight of her, stealing into the house, strengthened my resolution. I walked quietly to the *lanaii* and stood, hesitating, before ringing the bell. As I waited, I could hear his voice, lower pitched than ordinary, but, as ever, oratorical in its tone:

"But, Princess Adorée, you must not come here. It is very charming of you—and—and I have been exceedingly lonely of late. But—well, you must not——"

"Ah—Adorée, she ees not ver' interrest' to the grreat Americain consu-el?"

Manwaring laughed, with an embarrassed note. "Yes, I'm afraid she is; that's just it. But, I must repeat, you——"

His words were hushed by a peal of laughter, a melody that made me think of tiny, tinkling bells. Then I interrupted with the harsher, dissonant note of his house gong.

As the echo died away there was an absolute stillness. I

groaned inwardly; that silence seemed guilty. After a short moment I heard Adorée whisper:

"Oh-a, I mus' go. I mus' not be seen weeth——"

"No!" came Manwaring's voice, with a note of command. "There is nothing wrong about your being here! Stay where you are!"

I sighed in utter relief at his words; my appearance was not belated, after all. The statement was so like Manwaring. He saw nothing wrong in her presence there, and he would not spirit her away. I could hear his firm tread as he moved toward the door.

That morning, three weeks before, I had thought him cold, but it could not compare with the chilliness of his reception now. Not a word that I could pin down as rude, just his manner!

I set my jaws and moved, unasked, into the room. I bowed to Adorée and seated myself. "Now," I began, turning directly to her, "how long has this been going on?"

"What, Monsieur Thayler?" She was gazing innocently at me.

"Your coming here."

Manwaring's level voice cut in: "You'll kindly not put my guest upon the witness stand."

I turned to him. "If your guest doesn't wish her father to lose his job, she'll answer a few questions!" That was a bluff and Adorée knew it even though Manwaring didn't for she smiled slightly. Kuna was my right-hand man.

Nevertheless, she turned to me quite gravely.

"Monsieur Thayler, you do not need to makka question. I know zat wheech you weel say. I know zat I have makka meestake to come hee-re. Only, I do not—I do not keer."

She rose to her feet and walked slowly toward me. Her eyes were suddenly hot and rebellious.

"I do not keer! There ees not'ing wr-rong about me hee-re! Monsieur Manwaring, he ees so ver' deeferen'. He —he trreat me likka rreal princess! So kind, so mooch of— what you say?—ze court-say. I have nev-air know' a man likka heem! Zat peeg of a Laverne—he bothair me. Every day he say he want marry me. He say he want marry me,

an' ze ver' nex' moment he makka hit at me weeth hees fist! An'—an'——"

Adorée hesitated, then her voice took on a deeper, more intense tone. "An' Monsieur Manwaring, he ees so ver' good! Excep' zat time of hula, he have nev-vair even kees me! An' I have ask' heem to——"

"Adorée!" Manwaring interjected. He was gazing at her, his sallow face flushed with embarrassment.

I looked at them both and began wondering what on earth I could say. This was no ordinary tropic liaison; I should have known that it wouldn't be. Yet there was more danger for Manwaring than if the situation had been more elemental.

"Miss Adorée," I began hesitatingly, "you like Monsieur Manwaring?"

"I do! Oh-a, ver' mooch do I—love heem!" There was a childish naïveté in her tone that could not be feigned. I heard Manwaring groan at the admission.

"Yes? You say that you love him? And yet—" I paused to impress my point, "and yet you would ruin him? Monsieur Manwaring will some day be a very great man; he will be if he is left to—to follow his star. Now you—do you want to kill every chance he has in life? If you go on this way, you'll do it. Adorée, you don't seem to understand. But won't you try now to understand that much?"

I rose from my chair. I had said all that I dared. Adorée sat looking dazedly at me. For an instant she raised her eyes to mine, and they seemed stricken. That look bored deep. Yet I would not have changed a single word.

Manwaring followed me out the door, first making a sign to Adorée to wait for him. I expected him to rail out at me; I almost hoped he would. Instead, he walked silently by my side.

At last I could stand it no longer.

"Say something, man—say what you think! My shoulders are broad enough."

"There's little to say," he answered, slowly. "You happen to be right. And I—well, I appreciate the courage it took for you to speak as you did. It was just madness; but I'm like Adorée, I don't care! I don't, I tell you! Good God, man, I wonder if you realize what—well, what loneliness is! I thought I was going to lose my mind. That infernal boom-

ing of the surf—that hot white office—nothing to do but listen to the buzzing of a million flies—nothing to do! A consul in this place? Hell, it's a damn, ghastly farce!"

As I looked at his set boyish face, a sick loathing for myself swept over me. The responsibility for his being here, the whole responsibility, was mine!

I pointed to the bench where I had sat the night before. "How did it all start?" I asked him gently, as we seated ourselves.

"Loneliness," he replied, "and then more loneliness! And when she came, it all stopped! It was like a beautiful magic, a——"

"But how did Adorée happen to begin coming here?"

"She? Well, Laverne and her precious father have been making life hell for her. Kuna is trying to drive her into Laverne's arms. It all began about two weeks ago. I was nearly wild that day. I—I went over to your place, but you were out somewhere. Then I wandered in the direction of Laverne's. I felt that I must see—just set my eyes on another white man, even if it were only Laverne."

Manwaring hesitated an instant and then laughed with incredible bitterness.

"Laverne? White? As I neared his house I heard a cry for help. I got there on the run. I found Laverne trying to kiss Adorée. She was struggling in his arms—and Kuna was sitting and looking on like a damn gargoyle. I—well, I stopped that. And Adorée—her gratitude was pitiable."

"And it has developed into this?"

"Yes, Thayler, it has developed into this."

"Well, my boy, you've got to listen to me, to an older man. This thing must stop! I've lived in these islands all my life. I've yet to see the man that doesn't go under with a native —wife!"

"I told you that I knew it was madness! And I've fought against it. But the thought of going back to all that ungodly loneliness——"

"Manwaring, there are far worse things than loneliness!"

"If there are, I've never discovered them!"

I looked at him for a long moment. That eager, boyish look was gone. He had grown to a man's stature, yet the metamorphosis was ugly.

"Manwaring," I told him slowly, "I hope to the great God that you never will discover them!"

Then I left him. I wanted a little stretch of that loneliness in which to think out the problem. He was like a straw at the edge of the whirlwind; only a breath, and he would be sent spinning into the vortex.

Just as I reached the clearing at my first plantation I heard the pattering of bare feet. I turned, and Adorée drew up before me.

"Monsieur Thayler, I have follow' you. You are gooda frien' of—heem; you have say ze trrue woord zis night. After you have go, I did tell heem adieu!" Her eyes were brimming with tears, and her hands twisted nervously. "Oh-a, my—my heart—eet weel brreak, banga!—into ze two piece'! But—eet ees far, far bettair, yes?"

"Yes, Adorée," I answered, gently. "Yes, it is far, far better."

She suddenly dropped to the ground and began to sob bitterly, with all the abandon of the women of the tropics when they give way completely.

"Oh-a, oh-a!" she moaned. "My heart, eet weel—brreak—in ze two piece'!"

My own heart constricted, but words of mine seemed futile. At last I reached down and patted her on the shoulder. She caught my hand and pressed it to her cheek. "You are hees frien'—hees frien'! I mus' be hees frien', too!"

"Yes. And you must be brave, also. Remember, you are Adorée, Princess of the Island of Moröea."

I had blundered upon the right note, for she raised herself with a touch of pride.

"I weel remembair; I am ze princess!" Then she rose to her feet and walked slowly away.

And I, from the height of fifty years, sighed over the heartbreaks and the pain of youth. Sighed, wondered, and was afraid.

I was sitting listlessly at my desk the following morning, seeing the tragic face of Adorée instead of the black rows of export figures, when Manwaring burst in upon me. He was as pale as that baggy but immaculate white suit of his.

"Gone!" he gasped. "Gone!"

"Who? Adorée?"

"No, your invoices, the whole batch of them! I haven't any safe—idea of a consular building without even a strong box! It's criminal! I'm going to write the Department about——"

"Wait! Never mind about safes now! You mean the invoices for the *Esperanto* next week?"

"Yes, Thayler. Your regular monthly batch! They've been stolen!"

I sat down suddenly. The copra market was in ticklish shape; and I began trying to fathom just how much damage the leak would do. "It's Laverne's work, of course. But, how to prove——"

That was all Manwaring needed. "Laverne? Come on, then! We'll go over there now!"

"No. Wait a moment. We haven't any proof." Then an idea came to me. "I'm not sure, but I think I have a plan. But, by the way, just what will this theft mean to you, Manwaring?"

"Well, if I don't find the papers, I shall send a cable announcing the fact. And the Department will probably wire back, 'Your resignation accepted.' They have that habit at Washington, I'm told."

"If that's the case, we'd better get to work. Suppose you go back to the consulate and make another search?"

He nodded and walked rapidly away. As soon as he was well out of sight I set about putting my idea to the test.

I went to Kuna's hut. Jeanne, sitting in lonely grandeur at the door, smirked at me and began to chatter in parrot-like French. She sent an urchin after Adorée, and the girl entered shyly a moment later. Turning to Jeanne, I asked permission to speak to her daughter in private. She nodded good-naturedly.

Once we were alone in the hut, I began without preface, "Adorée, tell me what you know of the papers that were stolen from Monsieur Manwaring's desk?" It was a shot in the dark, but it went home with startling force.

She put her hand to her throat and swayed suddenly. "What—what do you know?"

"I want to find out what you know?"

Something in the uncertainty of my tone must have warned

her. She stiffened and began to speak—I would have sworn—guardedly.

"I have heerd frrom—frrom somewheere, zat ze papier' of Monsieur Manwaring were stole'. I am ver' soree."

Then I risked another blind volley. I grasped her arm and fairly shouted at her, "Why did you steal them?"

Her eyes widened, but she looked at me apathetically.

"Oh-a, you know, then. I do not have need to makka ze explain'."

"You did steal them!"

"Yes." Her tone was low and hopeless.

I suppose that my eyes must have mirrored my disgust, for I was thinking how completely she had fooled me the night before.

She drew away from me, and her hand fluttered out with a mute appeal.

"Oh-a, you—you do not have ze understandings——"

"It looks plain enough to me," I cut in angrily. "You steal from him, you who said she was the friend of——"

"Wait—wait—pleas'. Oh-a, I shall tell you, Monsieur Thayler. Zat Laverne, zat mad-dog of a Laverne, he say he weel keel Monsieur Manwaring eef—eef I don' steal zat papier! He say eet not ver' importante papier! An', eef I takka eet, zat he weel not keel Monsieur le Consul! To savva hees life—— Oh-a, Monsieur Thayler, but Monsieur Manwaring ees my grreat frien'—I have consent' to steal zat papier. Eet was on hees desk las' night, an' I deed takka eet, oh-a, so gladly! I have savva hees, hees——"

"All right, all right," I interrupted, grudgingly. "I believe you, though the Lord knows why I should! But those papers which you think so unimportant, they'll undoubtedly cause Manwaring to lose his position. Our government will tell him that he—he can't be consul any more." I was trying to translate the thought into words she could best comprehend. "Do you understand? His whole career will go to smash!"

"Yes. Oh-a, yes, I ondeerstan'," she replied in a low, still tone.

"Then, if you'll go with me now, to Laverne's, we can make him——"

"No! Oh-a, no! He—he weel keel you! He has keel morre zan two, t'ree man. I do know Tahitian man zat he

has keel. For myself, I do not keer. I do but have to makka smile, an' he forrget. He only t'eenk to strikka blow w'en I—what you say?—I frrown."

"But I'm not the slightest bit afraid of him. Come on!"

"No!" The monosyllable was stubborn. "No, but wait. I weel get zat papier back." She was silent for a moment; then unexpectedly she sobbed. "I know a way! Oh-a, I know a way!"

Adorée turned and fairly ran from the dim interior of the hut. I looked after her, startled and wondering.

And that afternoon my wonderment grew; for Kuna came parading over to my office, his sly brown face shining with perspiration and pride.

"My daughter," he began pompously, "she has consent to obey ze roy'l command of her father. Tomorra she weel wed ze grreat an' pow'ful Monsieur Laverne. To-night you weel come to my home—*hein?* We shall have ze grrrreat *luau!* Adorée weel dance ze hula of maidenhood for ze las' time. Eet ees not good zat ze marrie' womans dance eet."

I dismissed Kuna with the promise of my attendance and went immediately over to Manwaring's. He was sitting at that desk of his, across which so little business had ever been transacted. His hands were clasped over his forehead.

"You've heard, eh? Adorée's marriage?"

"Yes," he replied. "She was here, and she—— God Almighty, man, she cried when she told me!"

"I—I'm sorry, Manwaring. I know how a native girl can creep into a man's heart. Yet, dammit, I can't help feeling selfishly glad!" I stopped and lighted a cigar. "No trace of our invoices?"

He shook his head. "I've looked high and low. I would have sworn they were on my desk last night."

"Yes, I suppose so. But another thing I wanted to ask you: are you going to Kuna's?"

"Yes. Adorée demanded it in a way that I couldn't refuse. But, Thayler, why is she doing this thing? She hates Laverne. Why, why is she doing this?"

"I don't know! I don't begin to—to—Good Lord, the longer I live in these islands the less I can fathom them!"

Once more a *luau* was in progress at Kuna's. Laverne was everywhere, smiling, smirking, and bowing. He had all the

graces of a Latin, but with that curdling touch of native blood which made his every movement seem sinister. He was even inclined to be gracious to Manwaring and myself. His gestures showed that he knew he was the top-dog; he had won Adorée, and somewhere he had secreted my invoices.

I imagined that he was gloating over that valuable information which would so soon go to Fayette Frères. On the morrow, when he took Adorée to the priest in Papeëte, he would undoubtedly make a business call upon his partners.

The feast was consumed in comparative silence. Adorée sat with her eyes fixedly lowered, eating nothing and speaking with no one. Neither Manwaring nor I did more than toy with our food.

Again came the hymenies, with their chanted stories of love and death.

Then Kuna expansively stood up.

"For ze las' time, ze Princess Adorée weel dance ze ol', ol' dance of Moröea. Nevair have I see' person dance likka Adorée. Hell-dam', I t'eenk I am almos' soree zat she makka marry tomorra wit' Monsieur Laverne!"

I settled myself back and prepared to view the dance with more or less equanimity. Adorée, according to the custom, must dance for Laverne. Her every movement must be for him.

She began—and in a moment I was cursing softly. She was ignoring the Frenchman and was dancing for Manwaring! He stood watching her sombrely.

I glanced toward Laverne. For an incredulous space the Frenchman sat there, startled. Then his eyes began to glitter. They were basilisk eyes—inhuman.

Laverne was possessed of a tremendous breadth of shoulders, and I found myself wishing for my youth, for the time when I had been able to cope with the best of them. I edged nearer the man. I could at least stop him, momentarily, if he made a move that presaged trouble.

How Adorée danced that night! She seemed to be a thing of silver and fire and moonlight! Her lips were smiling and the heart of her was shining in her eyes, shining for that tall, awkward youngster who stood watching her with an intentness equal to Laverne's.

Before the dance was half completed there was a quick,

abrupt movement on the part of Adorée. Without seeming to lose the tempo of the music, she fluttered to Laverne's side of the hut. Swooping downward, her hand flashed into his shirt front and drew forth a bundle of tell-tale blue papers, my invoices! Back she ran swiftly and dropped them in Manwaring's hand, then swung triumphantly into the faster cadence of the music.

Manwaring shoved the packet into his pocket. I doubt if he realized that she had given the invoices to him.

I could hear the astonished Laverne muttering a long string of Tahitian oaths. The grin had left Jeanne's face, and Kuna was frowning blackly. Yet, so strong was the spell Adorée was casting, none made move to halt her.

As she whirled into the final movements of the dance I drew still nearer to Laverne. Then she uttered her low, moaning call and threw herself directly toward Manwaring. His arms were waiting to catch her, too.

Her lips were lifted for his kiss. As he bent his head, I turned involuntarily away from Laverne. As I did so the Frenchman jumped to his feet with catlike speed.

"By God, I keel you bot'!" he shouted, fumbling in his coat pocket. The next instant my ears rang deafeningly with a pistol shot, and the room was filled with acrid blue smoke. I grappled with Laverne, but immediately I felt an arm pulling me away.

Kuna, his eyes blazing, a long copra knife in his hand, threw me aside as though I were an empty cocoanut-sack. He lunged toward Laverne, and his arm rose and fell twice.

I looked toward Adorée. She was still in Manwaring's arms, standing erect, her lips still lifted to him. Again Manwaring bent very gravely and repeated the kiss of the accolade. She sighed; her body grew limp and her head fell forward on his shoulder. He lowered her down and sank on his knees beside her, cradling her body in his arms. Her eyes were closed and her face white. I knew that whiteness.

I walked a bit unsteadily over to him. "Come, Manwaring, old man, she's—she's dead. Come, I tell you!"

He shook his head and turned a blank face toward mine.

"Manwaring," I repeated more insistently, "come with me. We must leave her—with her people."

Perhaps it was the note of command in my voice. He

loosed his arms and obediently followed me out the door and into the blazing splendour of Tahitian night.

The ways of the State Department are devious and strange. It took that august body—and me—six months to repair the crime I had compounded with them against one Augustus Lee Manwaring, the crime of marooning him in a farcical consulate on a tropic island to please the whim of a selfish old man.

I remember the morning when the launch from Tahiti brought over the news. Cool little puffs of sea-breeze were ruffling the plumage of the royal palms. I was sitting, smoking, on my *lanaii*, assisting that breeze with lazy turns of my punkah.

In the distance I spied a briskly moving figure. The shoulders seemed to be a bit straighter, and the head had lost some of the droop that had been worrying me. Manwaring came to the veranda and seated himself on the steps at my feet, a very unconsular attitude.

"Well, Thayler, I'm transferred!"

"Where?" I asked, wearily.

"Milan, Italy!" His voice rose and his eyes lighted with a ghostly semblance of that old, eager, friendly look. It was the first time I had seen any approach to that expression in those six dreary months.

"Reports, man, reports! I've been looking the place up; hundreds of reports: tourists, manufactories, *objets de vertu*, and——"

The words lapsed and the smile faded. He turned his gaze to the view from the *lanaii*.

A bit of pure white cloud seemed to be racing energetically around the summit of the Diadem, the craggy backbone of Moröea. Out to sea, the island of Tahiti was swimming in the blue morning haze. The purple waters of the harbour were flecked with infrequent glints of gold. The song of the natives rose clearly as they chanted at their work in my copra sheds.

When he again faced me, his eyes held that same dull shade I had seen so continuously. A deep, hurt look, the indelible shadow of those tragic islands.

THE SIXTH SHOT

By SAMUEL A. DERIEUX

From *Red Book Magazine*

THERE was a dance going on in Steve Abernathy's house, far up in the Big Smoky Mountains. The fire roared and crackled in the big broad chimney; the barrel of cider lay by the window, rocking on its stays; the old fiddler sawed at his fiddle and called the figures; the men came swinging down the aisle of girls, snatched their partners, and whirled away; the low-ceiled room rang with shouts and laughter.

But there was trouble brewing, too. For Steve's girl Phœbe was dancing first with Bud Campbell then with Nank Morgan. She didn't mean any harm; she was just turned woman, and the prettiest in the mountains, at that. It was the most natural thing in the world for her while she danced with Bud to throw smiles over her shoulder at Nank, and while she danced with Nank to throw smiles over her shoulder at Bud. Girls always have done that kind of thing and always will. But that doesn't alter the fact that it's a dangerous thing to do in the Big Smoky Mountains.

First Bud Campbell stood in a corner, his chest rising and falling as if he had run a race, his blonde head almost touching the rafters, the grin on his face not good to look at as he watched her whirl away with Nank. A young giant was Bud, just turned eighteen, hardly more than a boy—but boys are men in the mountains as soon as they are ready to love and fight. Phœbe was "his gal"; she had been his ever since his trousers lengthened to his shoe-tops and her dresses lengthened to her ankles. That was the big fact in Bud's life, that Phœbe was "his gal." Nobody had ever dared dispute it until to-night.

Then Nank Morgan, who *had* dared dispute it, stood in the same corner, lean, lank, swarthy, dressed in "city clothes," his mouth drawn tight as a wire, his black appraising eyes full of the devil that possessed him as he watched her whirl away with Bud. He was older than Bud in years; he was ages older in experience. He had been away two years working in town, had come home on a visit, and had dropped in unexpectedly on this dance to-night. He had found Phœbe Abernathy, a girl when he left, now grown into a woman, and very good to dance with. He was not the man to respect another's claim. What Nank Morgan wanted he took.

The two men were neighbours. They had grown up together, fished and hunted together, gone to frolics together. They had been friends when Nank went away; they had met as friends when Nank dropped in to-night. Then Phœbe Abernathy had smiled at Nank, for girls like men who have been away, seen the world, and have come back. Then she had danced with Nank and thrown smiles over her shoulder at Bud. What was happening here in Steve Abernathy's house is the sort of thing that happens everywhere all over the world. But, again, that doesn't alter the fact that it breeds trouble in the Big Smoky Mountains.

Old Steve had had a pull or two at his jug and turned in early. He didn't know anything about it—he wouldn't have minded if he had. Girls must have their fling, and men must have their fights, and old Steve was a philosopher. As for the other dancers, they were young; every man had his girl, every girl had her man. They didn't notice, or if they did, they didn't care.

But there was one in the room who took it all in, and who knew what was coming. He sat by the chimney-corner where the firelight fell upon him, patting his foot and puffing his pipe and stroking his beard—old Bill McCorcle, who never missed a frolic, old Bill who had seen more fights and knew more ways of fighting than any other man in the mountains.

He could tell you how to fight with knives or pistols, with shotguns or rifles—just how far to stand, just how to play the game as it ought to be played, what *had* been done and what hadn't. In another sphere of life he would have been a scholar, maybe a professor of Greek. Of late years his lore had been listened to by ever-diminishing crowds at the cross-

roads store, like the worn-out lectures of some ancient professor who interests the rising generation no more. But to-night his eyes were shining and shrewd and joyful. For good times, such as existed before the law came in to meddle and take the spirit out of men, were coming once more to the Big Smokies.

He knew both those young men who glared at each other over the heads of the rollicking and heedless crowd; he had known their fathers before them, and their grandfathers, and he knew that they came of fighting stock. He knew they would not "take it out" in looking. Now and then he nodded his head, then went on puffing his pipe and tapping his foot. It would be bright to-night in Dead Man's Field, and the Field lay on the way home for Bud and for Nank and for him.

Once he thought the fight was coming right here in the room, and he rose to his feet like a bearded lion and dropped his pipe into his pocket. He had his rules, his ethics, his ideals. A room full of people was no place in which to start a row. Women would scream and meddle, likely faint or get shot. Then, too, a man who forced a fight in a crowd was usually a blusterer who counted on interference.

The fiddle had stopped, and Phœbe was talking eagerly up into Bud's face, trying, after it was too late, as women always do try, to stop the conflagration she had started. Nank was standing close behind her as if he owned her, though it was Bud's dance—old Bill had kept account of that. Suddenly the fiddler started up, and Nank snatched her from under Bud's very eyes and whirled her into the dance. Bud took a step after them, his face white, his eyes wild; old Bill started forward then. But with the dancers whirling all around him and bumping into him, Bud stopped a moment. Then he turned and stumbled out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

"He'll be waitin' out thar in the yard," said the old man to himself. He sat down once more, puffing his pipe.

Old Bill was the first out when the dance broke up—the first to reach Bud waiting down there by the road, the first to catch and hold him when the oath rang out and Bud reached for his gun and started for Nank, coming out with the rest of the crowd.

"This ain't the place!" he said, holding to Bud's wrist with

a grip that cut, and looking up into his face with steely eyes.

Then Phœbe Abernathy came running through the crowd straight to Bud where he stood, with the old man holding him, just outside the heavy shadow cast in the moonlit yard by a cedar. She had not seen him standing boldly out in the moonlight, as he had been standing when the old man reached him. She thought he had been hiding in that shadow—which was black as ink—hiding in ambush, waiting.

"You coward!" she cried up into Bud's face, her breast rising and falling.

The old man smiled with the cynicism of age and experience. The girl liked Bud and was disappointed; she wouldn't have let anybody else call him that. Old Bill had seen the two of them more than once walking down the mountain roads together, walking very slowly, as if there were no such thing as time.

Her face was white now, and she was sobbing when they dragged her back into the house. Not once had she looked at Nank, who stood in front of the crowd, cool and steady, but watchful. Old Bill knew; she might as well have said: "I love you, Bud!" It would have meant the same thing.

But Bud didn't know. Old Bill had heard him gasp as if the girl had struck him in the face. Bud was young, you see, and didn't understand. The world had ceased to exist for him. Later what she had said would rankle, would drive him mad with rage. But right now, as he stood paralyzed—right now, thought the old man, was a good time to be going.

"I'll look out for these two fellers," he said to the crowd. "I live down below whar they live, an' I'll see 'em home."

A man in the crowd laughed. . . .

Some of the frolickers, strangely quiet now, went part of the way with them, then at the crossroads turned off down the mountain, their talk and laughter beginning again as they passed out of sight. Silently along the ridge road trudged the three, the old man walking between Bud and Nank, his hands in his coat pockets, his pipe in his mouth, his mind running ahead to that moonlit field—that historic and hallowed spot that had rung with more shots and drunk up more blood than any other field in the mountains.

Old Bill wasn't bloodthirsty; he was simply a man with an

idea—the same idea that has been held by philosophers more learned than he: the idea that to fight is the chief function of man here on this planet that whirls round the sun, with the moon at intervals looking down on it and lighting up Dead Man's Field.

Bud was bareheaded—he had forgotten his hat—and he walked straight now, head thrown back, swinging along in the moonlight.

"It's a pretty night," he said after a while in a queer, loud way, and threw back his head and laughed.

Old Bill said nothing; he had seen them this way before when liquor or the love of woman had made them drunk. And Nank said nothing—only smoked a cigarette.

Suddenly Bud stopped in the road, and Nank stopped, and the old man stopped, very watchful.

"I said," yelled Bud, "this here's a mighty pretty night. What do you say, Nank Morgan? Is this here a pretty night, or ain't it?"

Still Nank did not speak, only looked at Bud quickly, viciously, his face white, his eyes blazing.

"Come on," said old Bill, dryly. . . .

In silence the rest of the way they came out into the flattened field at the very top of the mountain range, where the moon was bright as if it were shining on snow. Halfway across the field Bud stopped in the road, and Nank stopped, and old Bill.

"This here's mighty pleasant, now, ain't it?" sneered Bud, "this here walkin' together in the moonshine!" His hand darted to his hip pocket and swept his coat backward "Git out of the way, old man McCorcle!" he yelled. "Draw, Nank Morgan!"

Nank threw away his cigarette.

"I ain't got nothin' to draw," he said. "I got out of the habit of totin' it in town."

"Then, by God, borrow!" yelled Bud.

For a moment the gleam went out of the old man's eyes.

"I ain't got nothin' to lend," he said, humbly. "Things has been quiet roun' here so long, I jus' got out of the habit of totin' mine. Hit wore my britches pocket out. The ol' woman had to keep on patchin' 'em. Things ain't like they used to was," he said in his sorrow.

Then out of the vast storehouse of his knowledge it came—and the gleam of authority shone once more in his eyes.

"Thar's a way," he said, slowly. "Hit's been done."

"Then speak up!" said Bud, his face close to the old man's face, his breath hot. "It's got to be to-night, an' it ain't no fist fight. It's me or him!"

"Speak up, old man," said Nank. "Spit it out."

"Thar's a way," repeated old Bill, unmindful of the interruption. "Yes, hit's been done. Here—gimme that gun, Bud."

He unbreeched the revolver, a heavy old six-shooter, the nickel worn off in spots.

"Hit's a ol' gun," he said.

"Oh, it's good enough, I reckon," said Bud, proudly. "It was Pa's gun—him that died fightin' four men an' brought down two of 'em."

"I know," said old Bill, reverently. "I war thar."

He emptied the cartridges out of the cylinder and held them out in his hand. "Be thar six?" he asked. "Then here goes five!" And he threw the five away far into the field. "An' here goes one back in the gun," he said, and shoved the solitary cartridge into a chamber. He gave the cylinder a twirl and clicked the gun shut. "It may go off the first shot; it may go off the second—it may go off the sixth. An' you don't know, Bud; an' you don't know, Nank; an' I don't know. Only God A'mighty knows, an' He ain't likely to meddle."

He dropped the pistol into his coat pocket and looked at the two men. He waited a moment, then went on:

"Hit goes by the toss of a coin. The man that gits the first toss gits the first shot. The man that gits the second toss gits the second shot—an' so on till the hammer comes to whar the ca'tridge be. Bud Campbell, this here's your gun; you might have settled things here an' now, settled 'em your own way, an' you didn't. Speak up, Bud Campbell—heads or tails?"

A moment Bud stood staring at him—then he spoke:

"Tails."

"So be it, amen!" said old Bill. He took a quarter out of his pocket and held it up. "Betwixt each shot I spin this two-bit piece. If it falls tails, it's Bud's shot; if it falls heads,

it's Nank's. That's the rule all the way through. I may have to spin it one time; I may have to spin it two times; I may have to spin it six times. Nobody but God A'mighty knows; an He ain't goin' to meddle."

Only the amateur hurries through a thing. In all that followed, old Bill was deliberate, grim, impartial. He went out into the field; he came back with two stones, and placed them in the road exactly ten paces apart. Between each shot, or each click of the pistol that told that the cartridge had not come under the hammer, he tossed the coin like the expert he was, then got down on his knees in the road and struck a match above it. He handed the gun to the man who had won the toss, watched him take his stand at one rock, watched the man who had lost take his stand at the other, then stepped to the edge of the road, hands in his coat pockets, pipe in his mouth. "Ready?" he asked each time, and waited for the response of the man who faced the gun. When it came, he took his pipe out of his mouth. "Shoot!" he said, then put his pipe into his mouth again.

The night was cold, and his old blood was thin, but the cold didn't touch him now. As the cylinder brought the cartridge closer to the hammer, and the chances of prolonging the game grew narrower, his movements became even more deliberate, though his eyes shone ever brighter, and his hands trembled a bit now as he stooped over the coin and struck a match. He spun the coin each time a little higher up in the moonlight; he held the match longer above it; he examined the silver verdict closer.

"Say, but this here's fun, ain't it?" said Bud a little wildly on the fourth shot—a shot that came to Nank.

"Ready?" asked the old man.

"Ready an' waitin'!" cried Bud.

"Shoot!" said the old man. . . .

It was on the fifth shot—the coin gave it to Bud Campbell as it had given the two previous ones to Nank—that Nank took off his wide-brimmed hat and dropped it in the road beside him then stood facing the gun, straight and unflinching, his mouth a little tighter than usual, his face a little paler. But Bud was breathing deep, and his voice was hoarse when he spoke.

"Nank Morgan," he said, "you got one chance out of six to

live; you got five chances out of six to die. Is thar anything? Your ma or sisters or anybody?"

"Ready?" broke in old Bill.

And like an echo came the voice of Nank: "Ready!"

"All right," said Bud, grimly, "so be it."

He raised the gun; he took careful and deadly aim—and on his face came a sudden and terrible eagerness. This was the last shot but one. If the gun missed fire this time, it meant for a certainty that the cartridge lay ready for the next shot. He could pull the trigger once more right quick; old Bill was a little deaf and wouldn't hear the first click; nobody would ever know—and Nank would tumble yonder in the road, and he would go home this night and to Phœbe Abernathy tomorrow, conqueror.

"Shoot!" cried old Bill quickly, his eyes blazing.

Bud pulled the trigger; the gun clicked; a moment it remained level while the sweat started to Bud Campbell's face in great beads and his hair rose on his head and every muscle in his big body quivered. Then the gun came down, and Bud stood gasping and choking.

"Here's the gun, Bill McCorcle," he said, and turned away.

There was a dead tree lying prostrate beside the road, a white old skeleton of an affair. He sat down on it, his chest rising and falling, and mopped the sweat from his face. He rose like a tired man when Nank came toward them and looked his enemy quickly and searchingly in the eyes. He saw the grim approval there, the touch of gratitude, of friendliness, of comradeship. He thought for a moment of the nights when he and Nank used to go frolicking together. He had always looked up to Nank. Nank had seen his struggle; Nank knew the temptation that had almost overwhelmed him to pull the trigger just once more, to end this thing, to keep his own life. Neither spoke; there was no need of words; but they stood close together, united by some strange bond, while old Bill got deliberately ready to spin the coin for the last time.

High up in the air this time old Bill tossed that two-bit piece, their eyes trying to follow it as it went out of sight in the darkness. It seemed to stay up there awhile as if lingering, then off yonder a little way it hit the frozen ground with a *ting*. It bounced, spun round, then rolled off into a rut beside the road, as if to hide the secret it held upon its face.

They all bent down now over the spot where it seemed to have run there in the deep rut, while old Bill pulled the dead weeds and grass carefully, tenderly, almost lovingly aside. There was no sound but that of hard-breathing men. Even old Bill's face looked queer and drawn as he struck the match. They peered down into the rut washed full of silvery sand that glistened in the flare of the match. There was no quarter here.

Farther down the road now the old man, his hands trembling, pulled the dead grass aside, struck another match, and looked up and down the shining sand, then still farther, then back, his movements growing more eager, his face worried.

"Spin another one," panted Bud.

"Hit won't do!" cried the old man. "Hit's got to be found if it takes all night."

He struck fire to the dead grass and weeds that overhung the gully and the edge of the road, the flames, tiny at first, then brighter, lighting up their faces like crimson footlights. Bud went back to the log, sat down, and buried his face in his hands. Nank stood beside the old man, watching the flames and the smoke that dimmed the face of the moon now. There came a little impatient puff of wind that caught the smoke and blew it like a pointing finger toward the man sitting on the log.

The fire burned the weeds away, ran off into the rocky field in thin skirmish lines, sending up its smoke that smelled sweet and strangely peaceful. Among the scattered grasses of the field it struggled awhile, then went out. The old man got down once more on his knees, struck a match, and peered up and down the gully.

"Here it be!" he announced.

Bud rose and hurried to them, and once more they all stooped while old Bill held close to the fugitive face of the coin his last match. There was a moment's silence; then Bud staggered to his feet.

"I'm a dead man," he said, and turned away, "—dead an' bound for hell."

He took his place beside the rock in the road, tearing his shirt open at the throat as if the night were hot.

"Hurry up," he said.

"Is there anything, Bud?" asked Nank as he took his place with the gun.

"It don't make no difference now. I've had my fling. Only you can tell my ol' ma it was fair. You can tell—tell Phœbe Abernathy I ain't no coward. That's all, boys. This here's fun, I say. Them's my last words."

Old Bill took his pipe out of his mouth. It had gone out long ago.

"Ready?" he asked.

Yonder the gun came up slowly, steadily. Behind it Nank's face was white as paper.

"Ready," said Bud. "This here's a pretty night, ain't it, old Bill McCorcle—moonshine an' all."

"Shoot!" said old Bill, and swallowed hard.

Still Nank stood, pistol level, face like paper.

"Shoot!" cried old Bill and started toward him. "God A'mighty, man—don't stan' thar lookin'! Shoot!"

The pistol came slowly down; strange and quiet came the voice of Nank: "I done *shot*."

A moment the old man stood, uncertain, uncomprehending, wondering if the gun had shot and he had not heard. But yonder stood Bud alive, and there had been no flash of flame from the pistol. Suddenly the suspicion rushed through his mind that even Nank Morgan had lost his nerve and had not pulled the trigger. Then an inkling of what had really happened dawned on him, and he hurried to Nank, the suspicion and the question both in his excited eyes.

"You played a trick on us," panted Nank, his eyes blazing like live coals. "You never stuck no cartridge in this gun. You had us standin' up here thinkin' we were killin' one another. And you——!"

With hands that trembled, the old man snatched the gun away from him, unbreeched it, and exposed the cartridge. "Strike a match!" he ordered. "Hold it close here! I played a trick, did I? See that ca'tridge? See that-ar dent in the cap whar the plunger hit? See it? I played a trick, did I?"

He counted the empty cells back to the one that lay under the hammer. There were four of them. The old gun that had barked faithfully in many a fight had "snapped" in this—snapped on the second shot.

"That would have been *me*," said Nank.

"It *is* you, young man!"

Old Bill did not speak with resentment; that had left him now. It was just a question of doing the right and fair thing, of seeing through to the end this fight that had begun. He turned to Bud, coming toward them like a sleepwalker.

"Bud Campbell," he said, "this here gun snapped on the second shot. That shot was yours—that shot is still yours. If the gun snaps again, it is still yours—yours till the gun do go off. Hit's the right an' fair thing; hit's the only right an' fair thing."

A moment Bud stood looking down sternly into the old man's unflinching eyes. Then he cried out so loud that the startled echoes came back to them from the border of the silent field.

"No—by God, no! I don't want no shot—fair or no fair! Gal or no gal! Git out of my way; git out of my way with that gun. Nank Morgan—me an' you was raised together, Nank. Me an' you have been to hell together. Here's my hand, Nank Morgan!"

And so they shook hands there in Dead Man's Field, looking into one another's haggard eyes.

"It's all my fault," said Nank. "I didn't have no business buttin' in to-night. She's yours, Bud. She don't care nothin' for me. I ought not to have butted in. I'm goin' back to town to-morrow."

Old Bill McCorcle turned away and shuffled on down the road alone in the moonlight. Back there was no place for him. Young men didn't know their minds any more. The world had fallen on degenerate days. He had been swept aside like the prophets of old by a generation that regarded him not. Behind him lay the moonlit field. Below him the valley and the shadows. A mile down the road he passed the cabin of the Campbells. There was a light in the window. The Widow Campbell was sitting up for Bud. Farther on, he passed the cabin of the Morgans. There was a light in the window here, too.

"Things ain't like they used to was," he said, and shook his head.

But there was a grin on his hard old face as the moonlight fell upon it.

THE JINX OF THE "SHANDON BELLE"

By R. de S. HORN

From *Collier's*

THE feud between Captain Amos Waters and the *Shandon Belle* began within five minutes of his first setting foot on her. Surveying with a discriminating glance the graceful lines and smart rigging of his new command, Captain Waters let out a sigh of solid appreciation: "Lady, you certainly are one beauti——" And then, *bam!* a five-pound block, hurtling down from the tracery of spars and rigging aloft, crashed down within six inches of the apostrophizing skipper.

Now, a tackle or rigging block has no more business falling out of a well-ordered ship's top rigging than a planet has shaking out of its orbit. That the *Shandon Belle* was a well-ordered ship, there was no doubting. At the same time, there was no doubting the fall of the block, either. There was the block, and there was the dent where it had landed, staring out of the deck planking like a baleful eye.

Captain Waters proceeded with his inspection with just the slight involuntary uneasiness that such an unpropitious omen would have inspired in any reasonably well-bred New England mariner.

The *Shandon Belle* was a barkentine, almost new, the finest three-master in the entire sailing fleet of the Shandon Shipping Company. She had been built barely two years before to the specifications of Old Man Shandon himself, by whose order she had further been equipped and fitted with a magnificence more usually found on yachts than on cargo carriers. To cap the occasion, Miss Mary Shandon herself, suitably escorted by half-a-dozen hawk-nosed chaperons, had come down from

her fashionable finishing school and christened the *Shandon Belle* as she slid off the ways into the water. As if expressing her appreciation of the honour, the *Shandon Belle* had promptly beaten the best previous sailing record ever made through the canal and slipped through the Golden Gate in a passage time that made her a newspaper item for weeks.

That was before she had taken her cargo. With the advent of cargo on to her decks and into her hold she became a different creature altogether. Cargoically speaking, she simply lay down on her promises. This, too, in times when with her speedy lines and huge cargo space, and with cargoes screaming from the warehouses to be carried at top prices, she should have been piling up profit hand over fist.

What made it worse was that the things that occurred to wipe out her profits were always of the most inexplicably foolish sort: like losing a mast, for instance, in a Mendocino blow that ordinarily shouldn't have started a stick even in a sailing canoe. The fact that the cracked spar proved to be crazily faulty, while it might ease the mind of the captain, didn't compensate the owners any for the loss of time and money, however.

The next outrageous thing she did was, for some indefinite reason, to run amuck of the *Shandon Pride* while running in for the Golden Gate. The reason was indefinite, but the damage was not. The *Shandon Pride* had to go into the yard for some very extensive and expensive repairs that completely wiped out the profit that otherwise the *Shandon Belle's* quick passage would have brought to the Shandon Shipping Company.

And so one thing followed another until one morning Old Man Shandon stumped into his offices, plumped himself down into his chair, and blurted out his disgust to his secretary: "The only thing she hasn't had bought to order, Williams, is a crack skipper! Anyway, now that Benson's quitting her, here's our chance to try that on her. Telegraph to Pliny in Boston immediately and tell him to send out the very best sailing skipper he can find along the whole New England coast!"

Wherefore Captain Amos Waters, originally of New Bedford, reported in one fine morning at the Shandon offices in Pine Street. Captain Waters was thirty, husky, tanned, and

indubitably a seafaring Yankee from one end of his six-foot frame to the other. Old Man Shandon welcomed him with approval, and himself attended him to Oakland Creek to introduce him to his new command.

At his first sight of the *Shandon Belle* Captain Waters was enchanted. He hurried aboard. Three minutes later, as narrated, a hurtling block just failed by inches of cracking his skull, and then and there ending his seafaring for good and all.

Captain Waters, however, was not of a disposition to be lightly intimidated. He went on with his task of getting acquainted with the *Shandon Belle*. When he viewed her cargo machinery he was soothed. When he inspected below, from yachtlike cabins to spacious holds, he completely forgot the incident of the rigging block. Everything was in apple-pie shape. Former Captain Benson had left behind, on quitting, what was indubitably an A-1 ship.

With each new promenade, with each added hour, Captain Waters found some new perfection of form or fitting to gloat over. On the third day he started down the companion toward his cabin. Lovingly his eyes rested on the hand rail—a lustrous piece of solid mahogany.

"Lovely—lovely! The man that built you sure had a heart for beauty! You're almost too pretty to be true, you sweet, wonderful bit of perfec——"

He jumped; managed to hook his fingers over the edge of the hatch just in time. With a crash the companion ladder dropped from beneath his feet.

Swearing, Captain Waters drew himself up by main strength to the deck above. "Damn the cabinetmaker that glued that thing together! He must 'a' used toothpicks instead of spikes!"

Wrathfully he turned toward First Mate Moore as that officer, attracted by the crash, came running aft: "Mr. Moore! What the devil have they been doing to that companion?"

Wide-eyed and bewildered, First Mate Moore stared at the gaping hatch. "Two years that companion ladder's been in reg'lar use now—an' that's the first time any one ever so much as complained of it creakin' even!"

"H'm-m-m," said Captain Waters, slowly.

Together they went to examine the wreckage. An out-

wardly sound-appearing timber had parted completely across along a line of invisible grain fault.

"H'm-m-m," said Captain Waters again.

But when inside of two months a tackle on a cargo boom, carrying away, allowed several thousand feet of swinging lumber to come within a fraction of an inch of sweeping him overboard, Captain Waters did more than say "H'm-m-m." He sent for First Mate Moore.

"Moore," he said, speaking slowly and keeping his eyes fixed in elaborate carelessness on the mizzen shrouds, "—er, why was it that Captain Benson left the Shandons to go with the Belden Company? As far as I can see, the Beldens haven't got anything that can equal—or, at any rate, outclass—this packet here."

The mate shook his head. "I dunno. I don't think the Belden Company's got anything afloat with the class of the *Shandon Belle* either."

"You don't—er—remember anything happening, then, that could have made Captain Benson mad at the company—or the ship, eh?"

First Mate Moore was slow of speech and, some said, slow of thought likewise. "No, I dunno as I do, right off. The very day before he left, though, I rec'lect, the gangway slipped and dropped him overboard between the ship and the dock. He was awful mad."

"Humph!" muttered Captain Waters, evidently to himself. "I wonder, now, if that could be the reason——"

First Mate Moore turned perplexedly. "Reason for what?"

"Oh, nothing." Hastily Captain Waters turned on his heel and retreated to his cabin. It is not ethical for a sea captain to allow his subordinates even to suspect that he has misgivings anent his ship.

Four months passed. For a wonder the *Shandon Belle* began to behave herself. She even made money. Lulled into smug complacency by her exemplary conduct, Captain Waters again forgot his forebodings. And so one day off Ano Nuevo, the air being light and there being no possibility of making the Golden Gate before nightfall, he determined to secure something that both he and his owners had been wish-

ful of for a long, long time; viz., a picture of the *Shandon Belle*, up and going, with every stitch set and every sail drawing. Bringing his camera up on deck, he ordered the dinghy dropped overboard, and then called the mate to him.

"Moore, I'm going out in the dinghy with my camera. I want you to bring her up inshore of me where I can get a good light on her. Come right at me until you get real close, and then give her a full and just pass me a dozen feet or so. Understand?"

Over the side went Captain Waters. Setting to the oars, he pulled away until he reached a position where he thought sunlight and ship would coördinate to give the clearest possible effect. Then, boating his oars, he began adjusting his lens and focus.

On came the *Shandon Belle*, canvas gleaming, spars shining, a bewitching little bow wave curling away from her clipper bow. Captain Waters, standing up in the dinghy to get a better view, watched her come. "Mother of Moses, but you're a sight for seagoing eyes! *Belle—Belle—Shandon Belle*—that's exactly what you are! Come on, baby! Come to your daddy—you precious bit of a cargo yacht!"

One last look Captain Waters took at his camera. Then he waved his hand. "All right: ease her off!"

There was no change in the barkentine's course. On she came, straight as an arrow.

Captain Waters frowned. "Ease her off, Moore!"

From somewhere on the *Shandon Belle* came back an unintelligible yell. In her bow the lookout's face was one huge expanse of gaping mouth.

With a startled curse Captain Waters dropped his camera and sprang to his oars It was too late. One mad chop he made. Then the lunging bowsprit stabbed past his head. The cutwater flashed down upon him, the dinghy jerked and fell, part on either side. Only by the sheerest luck was it that Captain Waters failed to accompany the dinghy. Just as the bowsprit lunged past he had leaped. His clawing hands grabbed at the martingale; found it. For a second he hung, kicking, between wind and water. Then he worked his way inboard.

Aft at the wheel, First Mate Moore and two seamen were

tugging frantically at the spokes. Captain Waters went aft roaring: "You damn chucklehead! Whyn't you bear off when I told you? Are you trying to get my ship from me by the murder route?"

Great veins of exertion bulged on the mate's forehead. "No, sir. The—wheel's jammed! She won't budge an inch even for the three of us!" Captain Waters laid hold of the wheel. He might just as well have been tugging at a battleship's cable.

"Dadblast the blankety-blankety thing!" he swore. And then with a suddenness that almost threw him on his head the wheel flew free under his hands. The *Shandon Belle's* head whirled around so far that her jibs fluttered.

Captain Waters stood for a second astounded. Then he grunted: "By Jiminy, I'm going to look into this thing here and now!"

From wheel spoke to rudder they followed every inch of the steering gear, looking and feeling. Nowhere was there so much as even a twist or a chafe to give reasonable excuse for a jammed helm.

For the third and last time Captain Waters cleared his throat: "*H'm-m-m!*"

Into Oakland dock the *Shandon Belle* glided. The lines went out; the gangway dropped to kiss the wharf. And then Captain Waters went below. When he returned to the deck he brought with him a small leather suitcase. Carefully he set it down in plain view of First Mate Moore.

"Mister Moore," he said, bluntly, "I'm going up to the offices to tell them that I'm not skippering the *Shandon Belle* any longer. Four times she's tried to get me, and four is enough! At the same time, if I can't manage one of the Shandon ships, I'm too proud to ask for another. But I'll be glad to put in a word for you——"

Reaching down behind the wheel, First Mate Moore hauled forth something leathery and black. It might have been the twin to Captain Waters's own suitcase.

"No, sir, Cap'n. I want a ship, all right, but I don't want one bad enough to want this one. She's been stickin' to captains, but there ain't no tellin' when she may start in on mates. When you come out of the offices after you resign, Captain Waters, you'll most likely see me just goin' in!" . . .

Off Carmel, at night, in one of those drenching California fogs that the real-estate boosters so casually forget to mention, the Belden ship *Kongo* stole northward The same giant breath that had rolled the fog bank down and over her was bearing her blindly on her way. Blindly, but not dumbly; her foghorn was hooting raucously. Near the wheel Captain Waters himself stood, staring anxiously into the crowding mist. "Whew-w! Reg'lar Cape Cod weather!" he vituperated. "Hi, there, Tierney! Bring her up a quarter point!"

The *Kongo* was not the only blind voyager in that reeking veil. On the port bow a steamer's whistle was whooping hoarsely. A small sailing craft in the fog astern let out a ghostly wail.

"Heaven help the poor shipowners on a night like this!" growled Captain Waters. "Hello! what's that?"

The unseen steamer's whistle was yelping madly. Mingled with the shrieks were the lusty yells of a foghorn. Other ships joined in the uproar. Apparently the *Kongo* was surrounded by a dozen liners and schooners.

"By Jiminy, I wouldn't mind a bit if it was the *Shandon Belle* I had under me now instead of the *Kongo*," muttered Captain Waters to the fog. "I could git out of trouble quicker if I got into it with that yacht. That's one thing I'll say for her: she certainly handled like a Glo'sterman almost! Suffering cats, there's another one!"

From somewhere close aboard a foghorn was wailing; the sound seemed to come now from the bow, now from the stern. Suddenly from out the fog directly abeam a ghostly shape broke. A bowsprit lunged out toward the *Kongo*, a vessel's hull took vague shape beyond.

Captain Waters gave one frantic yell, half whirled toward the wheel—and then the crash came. And with it, darkness. . . .

The first impressions of Captain Waters' returning consciousness were an intolerable stuffiness of atmosphere, a total lack of visibility, and a severe hardness of whatever he was lying on. "'S funny," he ruminated aloud. "It ain't my bunk I'm in: I can tell that by the crick in my back. But if it ain't my bunk, then why the devil am I sleeping here?"

He started to sit up, with the intention of investigating. A shooting pain that immediately tore its way through his

brain caused him to abandon the idea. He lay back with a surprised grunt. Putting his hands to his head, he discovered just at the edge of his scalp a huge tender lump. By feeling further he discovered what it was that shut out the light and caused the stuffiness. Above him, around him, shutting him in like a shroud, was a thick heavy cloth. Through it at intervals he could feel the protuberances of tangled cordage and splintered wood. Also he realized that water was gurgling somewhere at hand. A faint ghastly wheeze came to his ears. "Holy smoke!" Captain Waters started with returning recollection. "That other boat must 'a' run us down. And I'm pinched under the wreckage! Hi, Moore! Tierney!"

There was no response; nothing but the wheezy gurgling. Captain Waters grabbed for the jackknife he always carried in his pocket. Tugging and hacking, he finally tunnelled a way into the fresh air. For a second he sat and blinked foolishly. The grayness roundabout gave evidence that the night had lapsed into day, but still the fog wraiths hung like murky curtains. Their thin veils became cloaklike at a few yards' distance. In that few yards, however, Captain Waters saw enough to set even his seasoned heart to jumping fiercely.

His own ship, the *Kongo*, familiar of plank and spar and shroud, was lifting sluggishly beneath his feet. At every heave the air and water wheezed in and out through her crushed side with an ominous mournful sob, like a whistling buoy groaning to the swells. Still jammed into the wound was the thing that had given her the deathblow: the crushed prow of the stranger from out the fog. Shattered side and crumpled stem mingled in one mass of wreckage; the *Kongo's* topsail and the stranger's jibs were as one. Beyond, the masts and hull of the other ship shrank back into the fog as though she sought to hide her identity. Like two grim giants locked in a death struggle, the two hulls creaked and strained against each other.

Most ominous of all, however, was the sense of loneliness. No human form moved in the blurring mistiness, no human voice broke the silence. Only the two ships ground and gurgled.

"—Moore! Pierce! Tierney——!"

There was no answer.

Captain Waters sprang across the sloping deck; thrust his head down a companionway:

"Moore?"

Dark, swirling water spat up at him. Captain Waters drew back to the comparative cheerfulness of the fog outside.

Empty boat davits gave the clue to his searching eye; mutely they explained the unanswered calls. At the same moment Captain Waters became aware of another intimation speaking louder than words. The sluggishness with which the *Kongo* had been lifting to the swells became an almost complete cessation of movement.

"Gone! All gone! And time for me to be going, too!" While he grunted Captain Waters jerked at his shoes. Delaying only to slash loose a dangling bit of broken spar, he went over the side.

Grabbing on to the bit of spar that was floating quite near, he paddled out into the fog, taking frequent backward glances over his shoulder. When the two hulls barely showed as one blur in the mist he ceased paddling.

"Now," he said grimly, his eyes fixed on the blur, "if it's got to be, let it be!"

A couple of minutes passed. With his arms over the spar, Captain Waters waited watchfully. A drifting fog wraith settling down to the surface suddenly shut out the dim blur altogether from his vision.

From behind the fog pall came a long, sobbing wheeze—another one—a creaking, crackling noise—a ghastly gurgle, ending in a grisly *whooo-o-oooshh!*

Captain Waters pronounced a brief requiem: "Good-bye, *Kongo!* You were a good ship, even if I have seen better."

He struck out for the spot whence the noise had come. Again the fog wraith shifted, this time upward. Captain Waters gasped: "For the love o' Mike! Ain't you gone yet?"

Vague but unmistakable, a dark shape hung in the haze. Something gave the impression that it was shorter, smaller than before. Also there was now no grinding, groaning noise emanating from it.

"What the devil! Am I seeing things—or didn't ye both go down together?"

Cautiously Captain Waters approached the blur.

It was a ship, indubitably. Black and reeking, she reared

out of the water. Captain Waters' eyes fell upon crumpled strakes, gaping bow, and tangled sails and spars sloping into the sea toward him. "You damned murderer! So it was you that stayed up, was it?"

His glance took in the gaping, sneering bow, the sheer of the strakes as far as he could see. "Blest if I ain't coming aboard you—you look like you're good for hours yet!"

A trailing stay gave him passage aboard. Along the empty decks he sloshed, staring about with a critical eye. "Empty davits—so your crew up and beat it, too, did they? Well, considerin' the hole in your bow and the way you were clamped onto the *Kongo*, I don't know as I blame 'em, either. Only they oughter stuck by close enough to watch you go down, seems to me—reckon the fog must 'a' shut 'em out and they couldn't find you again, though."

All this time he had been working aft. Near the mizzenmast he stopped with a hoarse grunt:

"You infernal son of a gun! So it was you that—— But gosh dang it! I might 'a' known it would be you!"

The *Shandon Belle* indeed it was. The *Shandon Belle*, listed, leaking, with a hole in her bow and her jibs over the side—but nevertheless the *Shandon Belle*. Captain Waters recognized familiar spars and hatches with ever-increasing rage. "Followed me up until you got me—didn't you, you simpering slaver! And you got me out here alone—just you and me—haven't you? Well, go to it! Go to it, and see who knuckles under first! Do your dam'dest, you blighted hunk of timber!"

Wrathfully he set about constructing a raft. The raft made, he looted the cabins for clothes and the galley for provisions. Piling this salvage on the rough raft, he called the *Shandon Belle's* attention to it.

"There, ye Beelzebub—see that? Now sink, darn you, sink!"

The *Shandon Belle* made no reply; not even a gurgle.

Sullenly Captain Waters strolled about, glancing down hatches, peering into holds, even hanging over the side in an effort to estimate the amount of lost freeboard.

"You're slow about sinking, ain't you?" he demanded, wrathfully. "Well, sink you must, sooner or later; and it's me that's going to watch and grin when you do it!"

Back he stumped to his loaded raft. Sitting down on it, he drew forth his pipe and filled it with tobacco which likewise had come from the *Shandon Belle's* cabin. He struck a match vindictively.

"All right, old lady: I can stick it out as long as you can!"

Belligerently he sat and puffed. Thicker and clammier crowded the fog. At varying intervals, depending upon the pipe's cargo, he went around and examined the ship's condition. The *Shandon Belle* seemed to be possessed of a satanic malevolence in the matter of delaying her sinking.

From somewhere forward, through the fog, a steamer's whistle coughed hoarsely. Again it came, and again, anxious, inquiring. With a sudden cry of rage Captain Waters stood up and stamped on the deck.

"Now I know what you're up to, you crabbed sister of Satan! You ain't satisfied with one ship murdered; you've got to take more down with you! And if it was a passenger steamer it would fair tickle you to death almost, wouldn't it? Well, ye won't—not until you get rid of me first, anyway, you won't!"

The *Shandon Belle's* foghorn lay where it had been abandoned when the crash had come. Grimly Captain Waters sat himself down to his self-imposed task.

Throughout the long clammy day he stuck to his post while over and around the gray mist hung like a drenching smoke. Onward the *Shandon Belle* drifted, blindly, only the barest surface draft cooling her sodden sails. Shrieking steamer and hooting schooner slipped by in the murk. In reply Captain Waters sounded the *Shandon Belle's* horn, as a sailorman without a timepiece can, at almost the proper intervals. And with each blast he execrated the ship he stood upon:

"You harpy! You scum of the back channel! If you was a decent ship, you'd 'a' sunk long ago!"

Only with the first faint evening breeze did the haze lift and give the signaller surcease from his signalling. Tired and worn, Captain Waters stumped slowly forward and lighted the *Shandon Belle's* running lights. Then cutting away all canvas but enough to give him steerage way, he lashed his helm fast for the night. One last look he took at the broken bow and the amount of water in the forward hold.

"Huh—you look like you could stay up till Kingdom

Come! But I won't trust you, you lying, indecent piece of junk!"

Curling himself up on his uneven raft, he lashed himself loosely to one of the timbers that constituted it. "Now sink in the dark if you want to," he grunted. "I'll be safe, anyway!"

It was but a fitful sleep that he drowsed into. He squirmed uneasily; low, nightmarish groans broke from his lips. The *Shandon Belle* with him aboard helpless had left her rightful element. She was sailing through the clouds, past the stars, into a region of eternal darkness. No need for him to ask her destination; she could be bearing him to but one port. Already he could see through the black void ahead the great, gleaming, malevolent red eye of Satan himself.

So real was the dream that he sprang to his feet, wide-eyed, crying.

Out of the darkness before him, not a hundred yards away, a great red eye was glaring.

He threw both hands before his eyes. Slowly and carefully he drew them away. The red eye still glowed ruddily. And then it seemed to him that beyond and above the glowing eye he could glimpse the faint outline of towering sails.

Springing to the rail, Captain Waters lifted his voice in a joyous hail: "Ship ahoy!"

Through the night came the answering hail: "Ship ahoy-y! What ship is that? And what d'ye mean, coming down atop o' me when I've got the right of way?"

Captain Waters laughed happily. "This is the *Shandon Belle*. And I'm in distress!"

Instead of the expected solicitude, there was a loud yell from the other craft. "Hey? *The Shandon Belle?*" Then the yell became an urgent roar: "All hands on deck! Cap'n Benson! Cap'n Benson!"

"The *Belden Lass*—or I'm a landsman! And with Billy Benson in the cabin!" grunted Captain Waters, gripping the shrouds impatiently.

From the vague mass beyond the red light came an uproar, a wild confusion of clatter and cries. The mad medley ceased by magic as a voice gruff with authority rang out:

"What ship did you say that was?"

"The *Shandon Belle*," barked Captain Waters, irascibly.

"And I'd thank you to send a boat crew over to me right away!"

"—Didn't I tell you, Captain Benson? Didn't I tell you?" It was the first voice of the night that broke in excitedly: "It ain't natcheral! I wouldn't go in that boat for a million dollars a minute!"

"Shut up!" snapped the voice of authority. Again it addressed itself to Captain Waters: "Who is that speaking?"

"Captain Waters—Captain Amos Waters of the ship *Kongo!*" roared Captain Waters. "Are you going to send that boat—or ain't you?"

There was blank silence for a second. Then from the *Belden Lass* came the amazed and incredulous pronouncement: "The *Shandon Belle* went down in collision with the *Kongo* early last night: we have the survivors aboard with us now! And Captain Waters was knocked overboard and drowned in the collision!"

"It's a blankety-blank lie!" shrieked back Captain Waters. "This is Captain Waters hailing from the *Shandon Belle* now! And if you don't hustle a boat over here right away, Billy Benson, I'll have your ticket away from you as soon as I reach port—so help me Joshua, I will!"

Into the colloquy broke a new voice, a voice whose every intonation was as familiar to Captain Waters as the knuckles on his own hand. "No, sir. Tierney told me the captain was standing right there when the *Shandon Belle* hit us. And we couldn't find the slightest trace of him afterward!"

Captain Waters fairly dented the shrouds with the fury of his clutch as he screamed into the night: "Moore! You pop-eyed walrus! So it was you that left me lying under the blankety wreckage, was it? If you don't pile over here right away with a boat and a half-dozen men, I'll come over there and break every bone in your cursed body—do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir." There was no longer any hesitation in First Mate Moore's tones. "That's him, all right, Captain Benson."

But Captain Waters, when the relief boat scraped alongside the shattered barkentine, was distinctly of another opinion. "Fetch me off? Like h—l you will! Come aboard here, you lubbers, and man those pumps! I'm going to sail this blasted garbage lighter into port!" . . .

From the dock, to which he had had himself hastily driven at the first inkling of the arrival, Old Man Shandon yelled delightedly: "Fine! Great work, Captain Waters! I told you New England was the place to find real skippers, Williams! I say, Captain Waters: come on ashore, and we'll talk over the salvage."

"Salvage? *Salvage?*" yelled back Captain Waters, forcefully. "Salvage for this rotten old scow? Why, she ain't worth the trouble it'd take to tow her out and sink her!"

"*Scow? Sink her?*" Old Man Shandon gasped. Then his face grew purple. "My ship a scow? My lovely *Shandon Belle!*"

Captain Waters interrupted him with a savage glare: "Shh-h-h-h-h! Can't you haul a hatch over that line of talk till I get ashore—huh?"

Old Man Shandon's mouth gaped. Williams, who had come down prepared to resist to the utmost Captain Waters's extortions, was even more bewildered.

Down on to the wharf dropped Captain Waters. Still scowling, he led the way up the dock, the shipowner and his secretary following mutely in his wake. Only when he was well away from the pier and around the corner of a large warehouse did Captain Waters turn. The scowl had disappeared as if by magic.

"Mister Shandon: I quit your ship once without giving you any reason. So now that I've brought her safe into port again I'll leave it to you to allow me any salvage that suits you—providing for one thing: You've got to give the skippering of the *Shandon Belle* back to me! If you don't, I'll sue you to the limit of the law!"

Anxiously he awaited the answer.

Old Man Shandon stared at him, blinking. "I—a minute ago you were calling her names—saying she wasn't worth sinking—and—and now——"

"Yeah, I know, I know!" hastily interrupted Captain Waters. "But that was in hearing of her. It's something I oughter known all along, but I only found it out this trip. Ships is just like women, and you've got to treat 'em as such!"

"But, for the love of Mike——" Old Man Shandon's eyes grew wider than ever. "What's that got to do with the *Shandon Belle?*"

"Plenty," responded Captain Waters, tersely. "She's one of those high-stepping dames, just like her name indicates. And you can't flatter them ladies without spoiling 'em. The minute I began to cuss the *Belle* and treat her rough she came through like a blue blood. But rough treatment's what she needs, and it's what she's going to get if I have the say-so. *Now, do I get the job of skippering that low-down slabsided piece of washtub—or don't I?*"

HIS SACRED FAMILY

By HELEN R. HULL

From *Harper's*

WITH little swirls of sound released from durance—bodies pushing upward, feet thudding decorously, hymn-book pages fluttering—the congregation rose for the last hymn. Constance gazed ahead, the corner of her mouth lifting in a faint curve as her only outer recognition that Lynn's thumb pressed hers under the cover of the hymnal.

"Sun of my so-ul, Thou Sa-a-viour dear——"

Constance did not sing. She heard, above the gray din of voices near her, the voices of her mother and John Barse, clear streaks of colour over the ruck, her mother's voice green, water-clear, John Barse's purple, like deep water. By moving ever so little toward Lynn she could see the choir loft, see her mother, a design in black and white. Triangles. Her white, pointed face, the long triangle of white net where her broadcloth jacket was pushed open, even a triangle of passive white hands. Queer that high-and-clear green shimmer could come from a design in black and white. She could not see John Barse; the shining pink baldness of Lynn's uncle, two seats ahead of her, roundly obscured John. That was like Lynn Holt's family, she thought, to shut from sight whatever they did not like. They were disturbed by John, for all he was Lynn's cousin and part of them.

Her mother was singing well to-night. Constance's thoughts escaped the slow rhythm of the hymn. "That's because she is defiant at what I said." What was her mother seeing from the choir loft? Constance wondered whether those neat proper backs had prying, hostile eyes. Everyone is talking about it, Lynn had told her. You should speak to your mother! My mother thinks so. She is terribly in-

discreet, at least, seeing so much of John. Can't you drop her a hint? Constance sighed. She had dropped the hint, clumsily, just before her mother started for church. Her mother had laughed, and started down the stairs to where John Barse stood waiting for her. Then, halfway down, she had called back, "I told you if I sang in church there would be trouble, Connie. Be sure you grow fat! That's the real cause of their disapproval, all those good women! Don't stay young when you are nearing forty! Slim hips are a deadly sin, aren't they, John? And you're marrying into the Holts, Connie! Grow fat and respectable. That's your mother's advice."

Lynn drew the book from her hand. The voices had ceased, and the church was full of subdued movement and murmuring.

"Shall we wait for your mother, Constance?" Lynn held her coat for her, without the fleeting touch of fingers on her shoulder.

Constance shook her head. Without glancing at him, she knew just how he looked—his blue eyes worried, his sandy brows pulled together making one deep, abrupt wrinkle at the bridge of his nose, even his sandy hair somehow more erect and agitated.

"I hear your cousin is leaving us, Lynn." As they moved toward the aisle the seal coat in the pew ahead of them had turned. "We'll miss his voice in the choir. So nice to have him singing the few months he's stayed." Constance caught the quick dab the woman's eyes made at her. "He'll be missed in many ways, Mr. Barse will."

"Yes. He is going abroad. Business." Lynn cleared his throat.

Constance wanted to run, to thrust her way violently among the sleek, fur-draped figures, and escape. Her impulse edged her to the door in advance of Lynn, so that she had to stand for a moment on the steps, waiting for him. Her heart was beating dully; she could feel it under her chin. Oh, she had only imagined that the people were staring at her with curious eyes! Only read into casual glances the malice of that message from Lynn's mother, Madam Holt.

"You were in a hurry!" Lynn took her arm, and they

went silently along the village street, the shrill squeak of dry snow under their feet.

"Dear Lynn," thought Constance, as the pulse in her throat slackened to the steady rhythm of their walk, "he's so honest it's as if he lived in a glass shell, and I could see into his very self." She glanced up at his square shoulder, his profile faint in the half light of the street, and suddenly she hugged his arm. His face swung around above her.

"You're not cross, then?"

She laughed. "At you? Oh, Lynn!"

"Wow!" He let out an explosive breath. "That's good."

"I know your mother made you promise to say that."

"Well." He hesitated. "I think there's some basis——"

"Don't let's argue about it again." Constance pressed her shoulder against his arm. "Such a little way home! I'd rather just love you."

"Anyway——" They were at a corner, where the street light made crisscrosses of shadows from the bare trees, like a net into which they walked. "Anyway, John is leaving town to-night. That ought to stop the talk."

Something in Lynn's square chin shutting on his words fired the girl.

"Why doesn't your mother blame him? Why is my mother to blame? We just were kind to him, a stranger, your cousin."

"I wish he'd never shown his face here! Your mother's a woman, and older, that's why——"

"Oh! Oh!" Constance drew away, rigid, from his arm. "They just waited till they had a chance to jump on her, all the old women in this town! Because she was pretty and different—and hadn't grown up here—and——"

"Constance, that isn't fair!"

"They've never liked her—any more than your mother liked me! Oh, I know! She sent you away to college to forget me! You are a Holt—and I? Nobody!"

"See here, that's all done with! I didn't forget you, did I?" Lynn stopped, and with a quick movement swung Constance into the circle of his arm. "We're going to get married next month, aren't we? And Mother does like you. And I—Connie!"

For an instant they stood there. Constance felt his words blown warm on her forehead; she peered up at his familiar, substantial shape massed darkly against the distant light. She shivered.

"Yes, Lynn." They went on quickly. "Sometimes I'm scared, I'm so happy. Scared of your mother as I used to be when I was little. Scared to be so happy—— Maybe that's why. . . ." She laid her cheek briefly on the rough sleeve. "Let's not talk about it any more!" She slipped her gloved hand into his, and relaxed again into her thought, "Dear Lynn! Dear."

The house was dark. Lynn unlocked the door, turned on the light in the narrow hall, and kissed her soberly. "Good-night. You're tired. I'll call you up to-morrow."

"Lynn!" Constance moved her fingers along his sleeve. "Let's run away, just you and me. Let's——" She pulled herself to tiptoe against him. "A desert island, no folks, nothing but us!" She shivered; perhaps the cold night air from his coat. "There are so many people here!"

"Silly old dear!" Lynn kissed her again, and for an instant she clung to him, her eyes closed. "They don't matter to us."

"You mean that, Lynn?" Constance stood away from him.

"Well, of course other people have to be considered."

"Oh, literal Lynn! I mean in the you and me part of life. No one outside of us could touch that—for me."

"You don't think anybody could touch my love for you!"

"Sometimes I am frightened. There are so many—your mother, your important relatives, your business. Oh, I'm bad and jealous of them all!"

"I guess you know where my heart is!" Lynn drew himself up so seriously that Constance's intensity dropped into a soft laugh.

"Yes, I do!" She pulled off her glove and pressed her hand against his breast, her fingers burrowing into the rough wool coat. "Right there, under my hand!"

He lifted her hand, and laid his lips on her wrist, a soft, devouring kiss, under which Constance felt her pulse singing for a moment of delicate, tender happiness.

"Don't forget that!" He moved reluctantly to the door. "Good-night, dear."

"Good-night!" and Constance heard him crunch briskly along the walk. She heard other footsteps, and turned to run up the stairs, her softness gone into a hard thought, "Lynn wanted to hurry away! He was afraid they would come in before he had gone!"

In the upper hall she waited, her toe rubbing over the worn place in the runner, catching the coarse threads of the warp. Everything was shabby! Yes, John Barse had come in. She retreated toward her door at her mother's "Ah, Constance must have sent her young man straight home. That's good. Come in, John."

Constance closed her door softly. "I'm going to bed," she thought. "Mother's wound up. She'll only make fun of Lynn if I am waiting for her. As she does when she is—upset. To-morrow John Barse will be gone. And in a few days Father will be home." She was slipping her dress down from her shoulders, and stopped, as if her thought had brought her father visibly to the door. A little man, with bright, restless eyes, a nervous high voice, a constant, artificial manner of cheerfulness. He was on the road most of the time, salesman for retail-store supplies. Clearly she could see him, running a hasty tongue over his lip, rubbing his hands—that awful, deprecating good-humour! Poor Father! Constance had a queer flash of understanding. He brought his salesman's manner home, trying hopefully to "sell" himself in the face of her mother's shifting, uncertain moods.

"She's so much cleverer than we are," thought Constance, "and unhappier, too. Brrr, I'm cold." She hurried into her bathrobe, and sat in front of the chintz-covered dressing table, brushing out her soft dark hair. "I look like Mother, a little——" Her hands drew the flying cloud into smooth bands, framing the pale oval of her face, and she leaned forward to stare at her reflection. Gray eyes under long lids, short, wistful upper lip—it was a serious face except for the whimsical upward fling of the fine, dark brows. Impatiently she rose, her fingers moving quickly down the braid. "But I don't feel like her!"

When she had turned off the lights she hesitated a moment at the window before she let the shade spring up. Sometimes she was afraid of the pines outside! There they stood, the long, pointed black row, the nearest rising past her window.

Lynn's pine trees. The corner of the Holt estate touched her father's lot—no, was divided from it by the wall of pines. For years Constance had looked out at them each night, and sometimes through their dark masses had caught golden flickers of light from the windows of the Holt house. Only last fall that nearest tree, after years of straining toward her window, had reached it, touching it with a faint, slipping sound. She had been wakened by that touch night after night, until one night, when the fall rain beat down the pine smell and the wind drove the needles, she had leaned far out, trying to break the branch. She remembered her panic when, slipping, she had just caught herself against the sill and had lain there, the rain in her hair. She had tried to tell Lynn about her feeling. "I think they hate me! They stand between us! I think that tree tried to pull me out!" Lynn had laughed and said, "Silly girl! Pines have to grow." But he had told his gardener to trim the branches.

To-night they were very black and still, except for patches of old snow caught in the boughs. Constance could see no lights. "Lynn is sitting in the library," she thought, "talking with his mother. He is telling her that he did as she asked. Told me that my mother was making herself conspicuous with John Barse, his cousin, a man years younger." She shivered. "I won't think that! I'll think—how surprised the pines will be to see me living on the other side of them in that great house." With a little rush she pushed the window high and flew into bed, the frosty air sweeping after her with the cold, clean, dark smell of the pine needles. "Dear Lynn!" She curled a hand under her cheek and slept.

A sound, faint as smoke, drew her abruptly out of sleep. Like a cry! She fumbled for her bathrobe. Still drowsy, she pushed her door open and clung to the balustrade, peering down, brushing a hand across her eyes. At the end of the hall, indistinct in the light which blurred through the portières from the living room, stood her mother and John Barse. "He's going," thought Constance. "I just heard them talking." But as she turned something in the quiet, rigid opposition of the two held her. Then her mother laughed.

"Afraid?" Constance shrank from the vibrant voice. "I am not afraid!"

"Then come."

"There are other things besides fear to keep me."

Constance could see her mother lift her hands in a gesture implicit with struggle. John had not moved.

"Perhaps you think that next week or next month I shall not love you."

"Do I care about tnat! *Now* you love me!"

"You will come with me, Amy. So easy! Just walk out of this door with me to-night. The boat sails at nine. To-morrow there'll be ocean between you and all this you hate so. Europe ahead of us, love——"

"John! I can't! I would only make you unhappy. And here—there is Constance."

"You've given your life to her. Now she has her Lynn. That's all she wants. She's not like you! What have you if you stay?"

"No, I won't go. I'm old!" She flung her arms wide, swaying backward, as if she fought against a vortex which was drawing her down.

"Old! You?"

Constance, straining wildly forward, saw him move between those wide-flung arms, saw his dark head swoop downward, and could look no more. Her breath hoarse, she closed her door softly—as if they would hear her!—and stumbling on the cord of her bathrobe, felt her way toward her bed. She heard a thin wail creeping under the door and then expanding, filling the darkness, her mother's, "No! No! I can't!"

She crept into bed and hid her face. She pressed her palms over her ears until the blood pounded like slow drums.

Her mother! And she had laughed at Lynn. She had said, "My mother is fine. You don't understand her. She is generous and reckless about—silly things. People don't like her here. But she is all fine, my mother."

And John Barse! She had been afraid of him, when he had first come, last fall. He was like Mrs. Holt, Lynn's mother, more like her than her own son. Dark, lean, a kind of fierceness—his hooked nose and dark sharp eyes seemed wrought by his own spirit. Just as Lynn's mother made her

feel. All her life she had stood out against Lynn's mother because she had loved Lynn. Now when that fight was won—Lynn had won, through his steadfastness, and Mrs. Holt had given in—this man had come.

Constance sat up, trembling. She heard no sound except that of wind rising and the pines moving in long, sharp swishes outside the window.

"Mother's always been unhappy." She could see the dark gesture of a bough. "But this is wicked! She can't run away—Mrs. Holt would hate me again. John is part of her family. And Lynn——"

She pushed aside the covers, thinking, "I must go down. I'll tell them it is wrong. John will laugh. Mother—she would listen to me."

She heard the door close with a sharp whine. She flung herself up on her knees. Slow, heavy, her mother's feet climbed the stairs, dragged past her door to the end of the hall. Constance pressed the blanket against her lips, stifling the choking cry. Her mother had not gone!

The night was bewildering, like a sluggish stream with drifting flotsam. The past floated along with jagged bits above the surface and the rest submerged in sleep or oblivion. Constance and Lynn, children, playing under the pines, his mother calling him home. She always called him home. Constance in the stormy rebellion of fifteen, crying out, to her mother, "Well, Lynn says everybody thinks it's crazy for you to stand on a bridge and watch sunsets! Why aren't you like other mothers?" and her mother's reply, "So you want my sunsets, too, Connie? You'd like me to play bridge—not stand on one, is that it?" Lynn, her mother, her father, Lynn's mother—half-forgotten things—drifting along.

In the morning Constance stood at the head of the stairs, reluctant to go down. She was tired. The night clung to her like a heavy cloud.

"Oh, Connie!" Her mother stood below her, slender and crisp in green gingham. "Hulda wants your laundry. Bring it down, will you?"

At the foot of the stairs her mother took the bag from her hand.

"Hulda says we spoil you, letting you lie abed!" How

clear and hard her mother's voice was! Last night couldn't be real, thought Constance. "But I told her that soon you would be living by system, rules, clockwork—everything we haven't in this house. And Hulda agreed. 'Let the pore thing sleep out,' she said. 'She'll have to get up betimes when she moves in with the old Madam.'"

Constance looked fleetingly at her mother. Hadn't she cared at all! Her lips were colourless and her long white eyelids had a nervous fluttering, but the girl's glance could find no sure note of tragedy.

"I didn't sleep well," she said, awkwardly.

"Your coffee is perking. I'll give this to Hulda."

Over her breakfast Constance heard her mother's voice, light, unemotional, giving directions to Hulda. With a faint resentment she felt that she had been dragged off a peak of intensity down on to the level of commonplace daily life. She never knew just what lay beneath the surface with her mother. Well—Constance stretched a little, into comfort. Good rolls. Her mother couldn't have cared seriously and be so ordinary this morning. Everything was all right. She could think about Lynn—or read the morning paper. She propped it against the percolator.

The clock on the mantel began to strike, its sweet, hurried notes tinkling nine o'clock. Then the hall clock sounded, deliberate and harsh. Constance lifted her eyes. Through the doorway she could see her mother standing in the hall, her face turned away. Something rigid in the straight, slender green figure caught at Constance's throat. Her first thought, swift and irrelevant, was about the green dress. Her mother liked soft, flowing things of chiffon; that gingham was a concession to Constance's sense of morning propriety.

She saw one hand waver out and close about the edge of a step; she saw the cords of the white throat tauten into harsh, ugly lines. Nine o'clock! John Barse sailed at nine.

Constance shut her eyes until that clock had dragged to its ninth stroke. When she looked again, her mother had moved beyond the line of the door. The girl sat for a long time, motionless, her young mouth growing stubborn under her wide, pitying eyes. "There's nothing else she could have done," she thought, at last. "And there is nothing I can say to her. Nothing."

She heard the postman's shrill whistle, and immediately after, the opening of the front door. Her mother had been here in the hall all this time.

The door swung open.

"A note for you, Connie." Her mother flicked it to the table. "And a letter from Aunt Paul. She wants me to come for a few days."

Constance lifted her eyes from the sheet of gray paper with its sprawling, uncertain old writing, to her mother's face. Her voice had dropped into a low vibrancy, disturbing. Her eyelids fluttered down over brilliant, dilated pupils.

"She's not sick?" Constance fumbled in the dark. Just the old aunt who had brought up her mother. What had happened?

"Not exactly. She's old. I haven't seen her since summer. You know——" Her mother rolled the sheet over a finger. "I think I'll go. You don't need me this week. The dressmaker isn't coming till next Monday."

"Why don't you?" Constance turned away, ostensibly to hang the checkered towel on the rack. "It would be a change." If she goes to Springfield she can get used to his being gone—the girl's thoughts darted at the relief—and I can get used to knowing!

"Yes, it would." Under the sudden intent gaze Constance's eyes filled with tears. Another instant and she would have cried out, "I know all about it. Don't hate me because you gave him up! You couldn't have gone." But her mother added quietly, "Well, then, if you are sure you don't mind, I think I'll go this afternoon."

Just after luncheon, as they waited for the taxi, Lynn telephoned. Did Constance want to go to a movie after dinner?

"I don't know. I want to see you."

"You all right, Constance? You sound tired."

"Yes. I just thought I might like to stay here. Would you mind?"

"I should say not. Say, Connie——"

The clamour of the doorbell broke in on the whir at her ear.

"Oh, Lynn! I'm sorry—got to go—the taxi's here."

"Where you going?"

Constance smiled. That was one of Lynn's silly and adorable jokes, that loud, dominant air of possession.

"Just to the station, Mister. With Mother." Silence. "Oh, Lynn, did you hear?" From the door her mother's voice, "Coming, Constance?" "Lynn! What was the matter with that wire?"

"Your mother is going away?" How blank and heavy his voice sounded.

"Yes. Just to Springfield. I'll tell you to-night. Good-bye——"

As she stepped into the taxi beside her mother she felt her face grow warm, and she stared uncomfortably through the dusty window. He hadn't liked it! Suspicious—of what? She twisted her gloves between her fingers. She had not thought of that. He meant that it looked queer, her mother's departure. As if she were running away. Not with John! He had gone. Just to hide——

"Your young man all right?" She felt an undertone of excitement in her mother's light words.

Then just a moment on the station platform.

"Shall I wire Aunt Paul you are coming?"

"Heavens, no! A telegram is the yellow peril itself to her, old dear. I'll 'phone her from the station."

"You'll be back before Father, won't you?" The cold winter sun touched her mother's face into luminous pallor; no sign of years there, except perhaps the faint crinkling at the outer corners of her dark eyes.

The train rumbled past them.

"I suppose so. I'd like never to come back." Mrs. Sprague relinquished her bag to the porter. "But I don't like Springfield, either, do I?" She smiled at Constance, a hesitant, wistful smile, and the girl bent toward her, half breathless, expectant. But the porter shouted, "All 'bo'd," and with a faint shrug Mrs. Sprague set her foot on the step.

"Good-bye, dear," Constance lifted her face, and her mother's lips trembled briefly against hers. Then with a rush the woman vanished into the car. Constance had a last glimpse of her moving along the aisle, a blurred impression of the white curve of her cheek against the long, drooping feather.

Lynn came in rather late and apologetic.

"Mother got to talking—but you said you didn't want to go out, anyway, didn't you?"

"I don't care. Brrr! You're cold." Constance slipped out of his arms back to her seat under the lamp. She gathered her sewing into her lap, soft gray silk, with a patterned border of small, transparent beads. Her fingers made flashing, uncertain stabs among the tiny, slipping beads.

"Nice picture, Connie!" Lynn's wicker chair crackled as he settled himself near her.

Constance fumbled with a bead that wouldn't slip over the needle. She saw uneasiness in the way he swung his foot; she knew that if she looked up she would find that abrupt, harassed wrinkle between his sandy eyebrows. With a faint sigh she pushed away the box of beads; they rustled like water.

"What is it, Lynn?" She shook out the silk, glancing at him over its shimmer.

"That's good. Put it away. You never pay any attention to me if you sew. What's that?" He turned his head quickly, at voices somewhere in the house.

"Hulda. She was expecting her sister to come in."

"Oh." He sank back. "It sounded—like your mother."

"Scarcely." Constance was curt.

"No. Of course not."

The moodiness Constance had fought all day swirled again around her. I won't talk about Mother, she thought. I won't! She sought hastily for something.

"Shall I get that curtain stuff to-morrow? I'm going into Boston, I think."

"Oh, yes. I meant to speak of that." Lynn pulled his fingers along the arm of his chair, stopping to snap a loose end of wicker. "I meant to speak of it."

"Doesn't your mother like the samples?" Constance asked quietly.

"She thinks they are pretty, very pretty. But——" He gave his upper lip an extra twist over the words, a grimace of embarrassment. "She wonders whether it is wise to change the colour scheme. For temporary quarters, you know. It would look startling from the outside. Right next her parlour windows. Sort of bright, don't you think? If we were going to live there always——"

Constance's white lids dropped over shining hostility.

"If you care about them—I mean, if they make much difference—I thought just curtains, you know——" Lynn stammered.

"Just curtains, of course."

"Another year, in our own house——"

"Sometimes—" Constance tried vaguely to stop the words, but out they pushed—"sometimes I think next year can never come. I think I am trying to marry your mother, not you at all! I think——"

"Constance!" Lynn jerked forward in his chair.

"To-night, as I waited for you, I thought—his mother is talking to him. Something she doesn't like. Some day it will be me she doesn't like. And Lynn will say, 'Just my wife, of course. If you don't mind, Constance——'"

"Constance, that isn't fair! It's not like you, Connie!"

Constance flung up her hand to hide quick tears, and Lynn with a lurch of his chair was close to her, reaching for her hand.

"Constance, look at me!" His face wavered, grew enormous, then blurred; as the tears rolled down her cheeks, his blue eyes were clear again, disturbed, steady. "That's my girl. You know better than to talk that way. Go get the old curtains. I don't care if they do look queer outside."

"It's not curtains." Constance gulped. "It's always something, and she has her way."

"Now, Connie." Lynn's grasp was warm and firm about her quivering fingers. "You know I just want her to be happy. But I love you!"

Constance was sombre.

"Suppose that some day—her being happy meant that she didn't want me to marry you. What then?"

"Stuff and nonsense." Lynn shifted uneasily, and Constance saw his eyebrows bulge over his frown. "Now, take these curtains. I gave in easy because she was worried. That's all. She's not so young, you know, and she has set ideas."

"What was she worried about?" Constance felt a shiver contract her skin like a cold breath. "No, tell me! I think I know."

"She didn't like your mother going away. Not to-day."

"What business is it of hers?" Constance pulled her hands violently from Lynn's grasp.

"She didn't like the looks of it."

"How does it look?" Constance was on her feet, her own anxiety running as fuel to her anger. "How does it look for mother to go to Springfield to see Aunt Paul?"

Lynn rose slowly, his face flushing.

Constance stared at him, her eyes dark.

"You see!" she cried, softly. "They don't matter to us, but they make me say things to you. Oh, Lynn! We've waited so long. We'll wait too long!" She was clinging to him, her face on his shoulder. "Lynn, take me away! Tonight. Let's not wait—until it's spoiled."

"There." His arms held her close. "You're just kind of tired."

Constance sighed and looked up at him. She could see him struggling for words, comforting, banal, easy words.

"I've got to go off for a few days, too." His hand touched her hair gently. "When I come back you'll feel better, what?"

"Where, Lynn?" Her hand clutched at his sleeve.

"Connecticut, Philadelphia. Factory business. Got to see some of the directors."

"Lynn!" Constance stretched up, her arms about his neck. "Lynn, take me with you!"

For an instant, as he held her there suspended, she felt she had driven herself through him, like fine wire. His lips were harsh against hers. Then his arms grew slack.

"How could we, Connie?"

"I don't know! Any way! The town hall—where do people get married in a hurry? They do!"

"We couldn't." His voice was stern, as if his own brief flame had alarmed him. "It would be foolish, with everything planned. Undignified."

"Yes. Foolish." Constance moved away from him, her arms limp at her sides. "It would look queer." She laughed.

"You shouldn't suggest such things." He followed her, but she would not lift her face. "I might do it!"

"No, you wouldn't."

"Well, someone has to have some common sense."

"I wonder. All these years I've loved you, Lynn, common

sense has sat right on my love! Holding it under—so it couldn't grow. We've waited so long—for common sense."

"Constance, dear!"

"Oh, I know!" she broke into his protest. "I'm unreasonable. But I am afraid—we may wait too long."

"But it's only two weeks now, Connie. Good Lord! do you suppose I don't want you?" He seized her shoulders; Constance felt his cheek on her hair. Suddenly she was laughing, softly.

"There!" She choked a little. "Poor Lynn! I'm bad to tease you when I know—it wouldn't do."

"Is there something back of this—you're worried about?"

"No. No sense in it." Constance sighed with laughter. "Kiss me, Lynn, and run home before I disgrace myself—any more."

When he had gone she stood for a time where he had left her The reading lamp threw softened light on her face making a strange mask, catching in relief on all the oblique, downward planes of chin, cheekbones, eyelids. And the mask was fear.

Presently Hulda's feet clumped up the back stairs. Constance stirred, bent to turn off the light.

"I am foolish." Her lips formed the words deliberately. "Nothing is wrong. John Barse is miles out on the ocean. Mother is with Aunt Paul. And Lynn—why, Lynn just kissed me and went home. I won't be frightened!" Her voice was a thread of defiance in the darkened room.

Two days later Constance unlocked the door and let herself into the dark, empty house. It was Hulda's afternoon and evening out. Constance let her packages slip to the floor as she reached for the letters on the hall table. Mrs. Henry Sprague. That was from Father. Miss Constance Sprague, from Lynn. Not very thick! And a third, in the black, abrupt writing of her mother. She would wash off the city grime and have the letters for company at her solitary dinner.

Lynn's first. Just a note. He had decided to leave the Pennsylvania trip till later. Part of their wedding tour. They could stop at Philadelphia on their way South. So he would be home earlier than he had expected, perhaps as soon as his note. With haste and much love, Lynn.

Constance let her finger tips rest against his name, and her

eyes dreamed a little. Dear Lynn! How foolish she had been, that evening, bothering him.

As she ran her finger under the flap of her mother's letter, she noticed the postmark. New York. Hastily she drew out and unfolded the sheets.

DEAR CONSTANCE:

Whether or not I deserve a hearing, I mean to ask for one. I didn't intend this. Not now. I meant to wait until you were safe from any effect of my actions. I should have known that the Holt tribe was so numerous that nowhere could I escape them. And now that I have been seen, I might as well go on. You yourself will admit I am done for.

I honestly thought John had sailed that morning. I fought all night, minute by minute, until it should be nine o'clock. If I had known in time I might have fought a little longer. But how would you act if you went to your execution, and found your head still on! His letter came too quickly after I thought I was through. He had cancelled his sailing and come on to New York. I could reach him until Wednesday, when he would leave.

What I planned in all sincerity was just to see him once more. It seemed so plausible, with Aunt Paul's letter right there. I thought no one would know, and I could then grow old and die with one golden day in my life. I thought it couldn't harm you. That little hotel seemed safe enough. And then to see old Mamie Barse and her dried-up daughter staring at us! No way to shut their mouths. You have heard the scandal before this reaches you, I know. So you see I might as well go on with John. I can't be sorry. Not for that. I am sorry it happened this way.

I'll write your father. It won't make much difference to him. I know he'll divorce me decently, so I can make John an honest man. And when you have married Lynn, you may forgive me for loving. I meant to go away as soon as you married. I have tried, Connie, to stay respectable as long it would touch you. Don't let them bully you about me. Disown me! I want you to be happy, too——

At a sound in the hall Constance lifted her head slowly. She stared through the doorway. That slender figure, rigid, groping with one hand for support, the taut agony of denial in the line of throat and head! The figure moved, blurred, came toward her. Not her mother. Lynn, hatless, his sandy hair bristling, his upper lip twisting grotesquely about his words.

"Good God! What a mess!" He strode toward the table, opposite Constance. "What a frightful mess!"

"You've heard so soon," Constance's words were distant, wondering.

"Heard! All the relatives in town are at the house powwowing! Worst scandal the family ever faced." He dropped into a chair, his hands clapping violently on the table. "How could you, Constance! Telling me—why, you said they were just fools, the women, talking about her. You meant my mother, too! And all the time—you even helped her get away."

"Oh!" Constance stared, her fingers rubbing over the pages of the letter. "You think that?"

"If you had only told me!" Lynn ground one fist into his other palm. "I could have stopped them. Your mother! My cousin! Why, the town will never be through talking about it."

"What affair is it of theirs? Or ours?" Constance pushed unsteadily to her feet, and retreated slowly until she had backed against the window. She couldn't breathe, sitting there. Outside was the slip, slip, slop, sl-slip of snow melting, dripping from the great pine trees. Lynn had risen, his face brick red.

"You think it's all right, then! Fine!" He strode around the table toward her so abruptly that Constance moved her hands to her breast, palms outward, in a faint gesture of protection. "That's what you meant the other night! About going with me—you knew this would come out. You wanted to be safe."

"Yes, I knew this would happen." Her white eyelids folded down, shutting out his angry, bulging eyes. "I didn't know just how. That doesn't make any difference. You don't have to marry me. You're quite free. I couldn't marry you! Live in the house with that old woman, your mother! Hear her thinking! Like a hawk, circling, waiting for a chance to pounce. She would say to you, 'What can you expect of the daughter of such a woman? Blood will tell!' Oh, she has already said that to you! I can see it." Constance had seen; just a flicker of admission in the midst of his fumbling, confused anger.

"You sound as if we were to blame! As if we ought to be ashamed instead of——"

"You think I should be ashamed? You'd like me to cry and be humble and . . ." Constance turned away; the winter night, beyond the window, seemed to lay chill fingers

on her cheek and throat; she heard the sl-slip of the melting snow beneath the pines. "You'd better go, Lynn," she said, quietly. "Go tell them, your mother and the rest, the town, that you aren't going to bring that woman's daughter into the sacred family."

"I haven't asked you to break the engagement." Lynn retreated a step; his truculence had a note of bewilderment. "I felt you hadn't played fair."

"You didn't even have a doubt, did you?" Constance was motionless; only her voice reached out, living, with the leaping rhythm of a flame. "You didn't wonder what I felt. You were sure. Listen, and I will tell you how I feel. Not ashamed. I have done nothing. My mother—for years I have seen her made wretched by talk; by what people said of her. Because she was different. Gossip! Before she married she sang on the stage, and so she must be—well, you know what they have said in this little, cruel town. And—of this I am ashamed—I have been on the side of the town, critical, trying to make her over, until I built a wall between us. I might have helped her. I didn't. I think she has gone now as much because of things that people said as because she loved John Barse. Your mother! The Holts are important, aren't they? It was such a pity you should take a fancy to me! But perhaps I wasn't like my mother. That was what they said, wasn't it? And I wanted people to think that of me. I wanted to be circumspect and conventional and respectable. But I loved you. I thought you were just and fair and fine. Then I began to be afraid. I was growing up and I did not know it. My fear was truth, and I have seen it for the first time to-night. The town has made you like itself. You don't know what I mean, do you?" Constance faced him. "You came to-night, believing all they said of me. All the worst. In spite of love. Your mother has won out."

"It isn't what she said! It's you, Constance! What you've said and done. If you can explain, for God's sake, do it! Instead of standing there talking as if I'd done something." He tugged at his collar, thrust his hand violently over his hair.

And Constance, standing so close to that abrupt gesture, had a strange moment. Her self had fled. Her hands, her

lips, her throat, her breasts, were sentient, conscious beings, things of will and aching memory. Her hands wanted to touch his face, to feel the firm, warm, familiar contour, to pull him down, down, until her lips had their way beneath his mouth, hard, demanding. Her hands had floated upward, fingers curling in their intensity, when he spoke again. With his voice her hands stopped, clenched against her heart, and slowly, reluctantly, her self gathered up and integrated all those separate, clamorous wills.

"You must see that I was justified. Do you think I wanted to believe you had tricked me? That you could lie? Suggesting that we run off! Maybe you thought that would sidetrack attention from your mother. What else can I think?"

"Nothing else." Constance's hands drifted down, empty of desire. Her eyes strained with queer wonder; could this be Lynn! This harsh, flushed face, with the twisting cruel mouth! "You must believe what you like." Her voice lagged.

"You can't explain, then?"

"I could explain and explain, and you couldn't hear my loudest word, because other voices make such din between us."

"I don't believe you ever loved me! Acting like this!" Lynn seized her wrists, swung her arms out in a wide arc. Constance swayed away from his rough breathing, away from his jerking eyelids.

"Let me go! Believe that, too, if you can!" She fell back against the window frame as he released her. "There's no use talking. Go tell them you are free. You don't have to marry me. Let them say—of course he wouldn't marry her! Taking her into his family after what happened! Good riddance!"

"I haven't asked to be released."

"You want that, too! That little sop—to your pride." Constance laughed, her soft, wistful upper lip a thin line of crimson. You may have it! I won't marry you. Now go home!"

He wheeled and started across the room. His coat brushed a letter from the table. He stooped mechanically for it. Constance's hand pushed against the cry which quivered

at her lips. Was it her mother's letter? If he should read it! But with an abrupt motion he tore the sheet across and the pieces fluttered behind him. One whirled to Constance's feet. "With love, Lynn." His own note. Then she heard his steps scrunching into the soft ice as he hurried past the house.

She slipped to her knees, her head against the window sill. Outside the slip—sl—slop came more infrequently, as the night grew colder. Suddenly the clock on the mantel whirred and hurried its tinkling strokes. Nine o'clock.

THE HORSE OF HURRICANE REEF

By CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

From *Short Stories*

"THE mares are for whoever is man enough to take them," retorted Jean Abadie from the bow of the barge which the towing launch was shoving into the mud shoal on the bay side of Île Dautrive. "Rojas has given them up. The white stallion killed his son, Emile, four years ago. No man of the camps around the bay will land on this reef; he has a name, that wild white devil!"

"You see, M'sieu Lalande, it is not stealing," added Pierre as he stopped the motor and looked at the stranger in the stern seat.

"It is stealing," grunted Joe Lalande, "else why do we come under cover of a storm to rope the colts and mares? Well, no matter. Once we get them aboard and up to the Mississippi plantations, I will show you something, you shrimp-seine Cajans. Throwing a rope, eh? Over westward they never yet showed me a horse I could not break."

The two seine-haulers from Sanchez's platform looked at him doubtfully. "Over westward," to the men of Barataria Bay, began at the dim marsh shore and stretched to infinity. A native never ventured so far; out there anything might be possible. But no man had faced the exiled king of Dautrive reef. Pierre muttered again how they would get the young mares—they would first shoot the white stallion. It was the hurricane month; they knew well enough that an obliterating sea would come this week over the dunes and marshes. Old Rojas, living with his grandchildren, orphaned by the white brute's savagery, on the far west point of the island, would never know what happened to the five mares and colts. More

than once the gales off the Gulf had left the shell-beached *chênaies* far up the bay strewn with the dead cattle of the people of the reefs.

The big Lalande laughed as he followed through the salt grass to the first low dunes. "Shoot him! You'll shoot no horse with me! You say he's so bad; show him to me! I'll rope and load him, too, my friends, or he will finish me. If we lift Rojas's animals we take 'em all."

The Cajans laughed in nervous disbelief. Lalande, a native, also, who had returned this season to haul seine in Sanchez's company, might have been a great man with the pitching broncos he told of, but Rojas's great white stallion—well, this boaster would see! The brute would allow no seine-crew to land on Île Dautrive; they told of his charging upon the fishing skiffs clear out to the surf line. Sanchez, the boss, had shot him once as he fled to his lugger, leaving the bleeding stallion to rend and trample an abandoned seine.

Grandpère Rojas, in his camp across the shoal depression that cut through the reef, had never tried to reclaim the wild mares and the colts of the white stud's breed. The generations of them lived on the coarse reef grass and the rain pools; an oysterman had no use for horses, anyhow. His son, Émile, had tried this foolish experiment of raising horses on the reef, and given his life under the stallion's hoofs. *Grandpère* had shrugged and let the breed go wild; yet, as Lalande muttered when Jean and Pierre proposed to use his skill in lifting the younger animals, the horses were his to the scrawniest colt. But Lalande had come. He would show these shrimpers; and even if they only roped and dragged the least unruly to the barge, Lalande could break them and Pierre sell them to the plantations. Yet it was horse stealing. Lalande would not gloss that over, but something else had drawn him here—the stories the islanders told of the white stallion's savagery.

"Old Rojas's son, I will be the avenger," he grunted, sullenly, and came on the day Pierre had chosen for the secret raid.

Abadie had stopped in the sandy trail broken through the mangroves to the top of the sand ridge. "*Bon Dieu!*" he whispered, pointing. "His track, Lalande! Big as a bucket! *Eh, bien!* I'd rather face a hurricane than this white tiger!"

Lalande had stepped out in the open sand patch. From

here the dunes fell away to the Gulf beach. Already the sea was rising. Between Dautrive and the outer bar curious, oily currents were twisting in unwonted directions, and beyond them the surf broke in white, serried teeth gleaming against the black southeast. The sky was ribboned in black lines streaming northerly; the wind came in fitful smashes against the mangrove thickets and then seemed sucked up to howl in the writhing clouds.

"There'll have to be quick work," muttered Pierre. "I tell you this is bad, this sea. We waited too long, M'sieu Lalande. We better be back across the bay, and try for the colts another time."

Lalande's gray eyes narrowed surlily. He straightened his powerful figure above the wind-slanting bushes. The two shrimpers had seemed to skulk in their protection. Jean peered down the spray-driven shoreline.

"If we can work one of the yearlings back to the bay side, get him into the mud and tall grass, M'sieu Lalande could use his rope."

But Lalande had gone down the other way. He was out in the open. They howled at him. That was no way to do it! They must stalk the colts. Nothing could be done if the leader of the wild band saw them—unless they killed him first. He would charge a man on sight, he would wreck a boat in the shoals.

Lalande was laughing, whirling his lariat over the mangroves. "I see the mares, Jean! They are crossing the ridge back of us. Getting out of the wind. The big white devil, there he is, eh?"

The two other raiders had crept back through the brush. It was disconcerting to find the animals crossing their trail behind. "If he smells a man he will never let up on us, Lalande," muttered Jean. "Kill him, then!"

The white leader had crossed the trail of the raiders. He turned, broke through the brush, and gained the ridge forty yards from them. Lalande could see him now against the black skyline very plainly. A tremendous brute towering above the others, his shaggy mane flowing backward in the wind, his muzzle outstretched, his neck tensed until the powerful muscles bulged the satin skin. He was suspicious; he stood there a challenging figure to the storm, but his eyes

were roving watchfully into the thickets as a tiger scenting prey.

Lalande glanced back. His comrades had slunk below the mangroves. They were brave, hardy men of the hurricane coast, but the evil name of the sea horse of Île Dautrive seemed to hold them nerveless. The horse was coming on along the top of the ridge slowly crashing through the brush with alert glances right and left. His pink nostrils quivered, his iron-gray tail raised and swept in the wind puffs.

"They will shoot," muttered Lalande. "If he trails them the cowards will shoot." And he stepped more in the open, and then shouted, "Come, thieves, let the colts go! I will need you on the throw-line to check and choke this brute!" Breast-high in the windswept thickets he was laughing and coiling his rope. This was a foe for a strong man who boasted!

The great horse suddenly upreared with a neigh that was like the roar of a lion. No man had so much as ever put finger on him; he had beaten the brains from one, broken the leg of another, and smashed two seine skiffs in the shallows for invaders. He had been the lord of the reef. Now he reared again and again as he plunged through the mangroves watching for the fugitives as a cat would a mouse under a flimsy cover of straw.

His satiny flanks were toward Lalande; apparently he had not yet discovered the man behind him in this hunt for the others. And then, out of pure panic as the white stallion broke near him, Jean Abadie fired. Lalande cursed and sprang down the slope of dunes after them. He knew he would need their help when he roped this horse; it was no starveling cayuse of the Texas range. But he saw now that the two islanders were skulking for the boat in the last fringe of the mangroves. They would never make it; out in the open the white stallion would crush them both ere they covered half the marsh grass, unless, indeed, they killed him.

The brute saw them now; he swerved in a tremendous rush below the man on the higher sand. Lalande was whirling his rope, and when he heard the hiss of it through the air he laughed, for he knew the throw was true.

"*Eh, bien*, devil! You and me!" He went down sprawling, seeking a root of the tough mangroves to snub the line. He caught one, then it was jerked out; and he went trundling

and rolling over and over through the sands hanging to the lariat. He might as well have roped a torpedo. The horse was in the open now rearing and bucking, but with his savage eyes still on the fugitives. They were floundering through the water. Jean was jerking the mooring-lines from the barge, and Pierre poling the launch back from the swamp grass. The stallion was surging on with the line cutting deep in his neck, but they could not see this in the welter of spray he threw in his charge.

Joe Lalande was on his back in the high grass, bruised and dizzy from his ride on the throw-rope. It was lying out taut through the grass; and for a time the man did not stir. The stallion was plunging somewhere out there, still implacable with fury to get at the shrimpers. Then Lalande heard the first throb of the motor. They were getting away, leaving him, then? They must think him killed—a good end for a braggart who would rather fight the stud than steal the mares!

He lay in the grass listening, without even resentment. The wide reach of the bay northward was flecked with white surges rising between those curious oily bulges of water, the first stir of the creeping tides which come upon the Gulf shores before the hurricane winds. Lalande remembered enough of his boyhood among the island folk to know that. Pierre was right: they had waited too long for this week of storm to raid Rojas's wild horses.

He crept around on the jerking line. Above the grass billows he saw the brute. He was whirling madly in the shallows fighting this strange, choking clutch on his neck. Then he charged back up the dunes, and Lalande barely had time to lie out on the line ere he was dragged again. But when the stallion plunged into the thickets, no human strength could hold. He felt his fingers breaking in the tangle of rope and roots, his face ground into the sand and pounded by showers of sand from the brute's hoofs.

Lalande staggered to his feet presently, cleared his eyes, and followed a crashing trail over the sand ridge. Northward he saw the launch rocking its way across the pass with whip-like streamers of wind hitting the water beyond. Everywhere the coast folk would be debating whether to quit their platform camps and take to the luggers or trust to the oaks of the

chênaies and their moorings. The hurricane month, and a sea coming up past Cuba! Île Dernière had vanished under the waves; La Caminada gone with six hundred souls; these were traditions of the coast, but the natives knew what a hurricane tide meant on the low, loose sand islands that fringed the Louisiana swamps.

Lalande paused on the highest ridge. There was that sullen glister of the sea, cut through with patches of white, and the green-back horizon gaping to east and west and blotting out with gray squalls. The great wind had not come yet beyond these first squadrons. The big man shrugged as he regarded it. The hurricane tide was shoving frothy fingers out over the shoals. Across the sandy stretch westward he could just see the shack camp of *Grandpère* Rojas on the highest ridge of Dautrive. A few ragged oaks showed white against the sky. The old man ought to be leaving with his orphaned grandchildren, taking his stout oyster lugger and making for the solid land fourteen miles north across the bay.

"It is no place for little ones," muttered Lalande in the Cajan patois. "These people never will leave quick enough before the storms. I can see the old man's lugger still riding behind the point. He is a fool, old Rojas, afraid to put foot on this end of the reef because of the white stud, but stubborn against the sea which comes like a million white horses."

He went warily on the crushed trail. That throw-rope would foul somewhere in the mangroves; that stallion would choke himself to a stupor, for not all the strength in the world can avail against lungs bursting for air. Then he saw the mares. They were huddled in a hollow of the dunes, the colts about them as if confused, uncertain, their shaggy coats ruffled in the wind. That wind was moaning now, high and far; not so bad here on the reef, but striking in slants on the sea as if the sky had opened to let an arrow loose. A hundred miles away as yet, that Gulf hurricane wind, but mounting; sixty, eighty, a hundred miles an hour—a hundred and twenty-five in the bursts that presently drove the sand dunes into smoke.

The rim of wet sand beyond the dry, hummocky space was covering with sheets of black water racing from the surf line breaking on the shoals.

And here Lalande saw what he had sought. There was the white mound in the ripples. With a cry he dashed for it. The horse was down. He had not thought it would come so soon. But the end of the trailing rope had fouled a great driftheap, and the brute had kept on charging and fighting until he choked and fell in the first wash of the sea. The slip-noose was bound to cut him down if he kept on hurling his weight against it, Lalande knew.

He wished he had seen the last magnificent fight against it on the sands; but now he walked quickly around the fallen brute, and knelt to touch his distended, quivering nostrils. The eyes were shut but bulging under a film. The great sides were heaving, a rumbling groan found escape somehow; it was as if the mighty heart was breaking with a last throb against this mysterious power choking its strength away.

"Eh, soldier!" whispered Lalande, and felt high on the horse's neck.

A sudden apprehension took him. Perhaps the thong had killed the renegade? He did not mean that; he was filled with a great exultant joy in this savage. He had stalked and subdued him alone! He stood above this outstretched, trembling body in the first sea ripples, laughing.

"Come, boy! The fight's not done yet! Not the end yet." He twisted his fingers into the taut rope, forced on the dragging driftwood, and eased the tension bit by bit. The rope was buried in the white skin; he worked hurriedly, fearing it was too late.

"Come, come; this will not do——" he was whispering into the stallion's tense ear, fighting at the rope. Then came a fierce, convulsive blow, an explosive sigh, a struggle, and the stallion lay quiet again. He was breathing in great, resurging sighs. His filmed eyes opened slowly. Lalande kept on patting his muzzle while he hitched the noose into a knot that would hold but not choke again. He did not know why he did this, only it seemed fair. He was looking close into the brute's eyes which were beginning to glow with sense again; and to withdraw the choking hitch seemed only justice.

Lalande stood up and looked down at the white stallion. The water was roaring out there now. The skyline was blown white as feathers. The mangroves were slanting; and he suddenly realized that the wind was hard as a plank against

his cheek. Not bursting, but steadily lying against the land. There was no rain, yet the air was full of water streaming in white lines through a growing darkness.

"Get up!" he shouted. "The sea is coming. This is no place to be! Comrade, on your feet!"

And the great horse did so. First plunging up, but with his haunches squatted in the water as he looked slowly about. Then to all fours and standing with his tail whipped about on his heaving flanks. He seemed watching that wall of blown water from the Gulf. Watching steadily, undaunted. The sands under the racing froth seemed trembling; one could hardly see the mangrove dunes not a hundred yards away.

Lalande swiftly turned his eyes from the ridge at a sound. It had seemed a shriek above the other tumult. Then he leaped, and the wind appeared to lift him above the shaking earth.

For the great stud was on him. Upreared above him, a shaggy hoof coming not an inch's breadth from his skull.

Just a glimpse of those red, savage eyes; and the impact of those huge feet almost upon his own. Then Lalande ran. The hurricane wind flung him onward, but he could hear the rush of the white stallion. The entangled rope checked the charge only enough to allow the man to hurl himself into the first mangroves, crawl under them in a whirlwind of rising sands, and keep on crawling. When he stopped he knew the horse was crashing in the thickets hunting him. He saw him as a wraith against the sky, plunging his head low to ferre' out his enemy, blowing explosively and hurling the toug mangrove clumps aside.

Lalande kept on his stealthy crawl. He lay, finally, in a water-riven dusk under the lee of the dunes, listening. "*Dieu!*" he panted. "I said, a soldier! The hurricane could not stop that hate of men!"

For half an hour he did not move. The brute had lost his trail. And when Lalande crawled to the top of the dunes he could not stand. All over the weather side the sea had risen. It was white. White, that was all he could say. And the wind? It did not seem a wind, merely a crushing of one's skull and lungs. When he tried to turn away it threw him headlong, but he got to his feet on the northerly, lee side of the sand ridge and fought on.

The sand was dissolving under his feet, and now he saw the water of the bay streaming by him. The inner marshes were gone; the hurricane tide was on, and sixty miles inland it would rush to batter on the cypress forests and the back levees of the plantation lands. Lalande had no illusions about Île Dautrive—he had been a lad on this coast—but he kept on, for the highest ridge was at the western point. Across the sand shoal, beyond this point, was still higher land, a clay fragment in which grew a few stout oaks. By these Old Rojas's camp had stood. It did not stand there now, thought Lalande. Nothing built by man on the reef would stand. *Grandpère* and the children of the man whom the white stallion had killed must certainly have taken to the lugger—escaped before the hurricane tide rushed upon the flimsy shack. Surely, yes. Rojas was no fool!

Lalande kept on, clinging to the thickets when the worst clutch of the wind was on him. The roaring of it all was so steady that actually he seemed in a great silence; as if a new element had enveloped him, a normal thing, this shock and unceasing tenseness of feeling and of sound. Through it he strode steadily himself, a strong man with neither fear nor curiosity—a mere dull plunge on to the last foothold of that reef which was churning to gruel behind his steps. He could not miss the point; there was no other spot to reach, and the hurricane was guide as well as captor.

And his mind was upon the lord of Dautrive Island. "He will go. Perhaps he is gone now. And the mares and colts, all off the reef by now." And a grim satisfaction came that the white stud had turned on him at the last. It was fine to think of. The savage had not cringed. "I do not want anything that can be stolen," he murmured, and spat the sea spray from his sore lips. "His mares and colts, he fights for them—that devil!"

And he began shouting profane, fond challenges and adulations to his conqueror somewhere in this white chaos of a night. A whipping wisp of scud was that charging shape above the torn thickets; any single shriek of the storm his trumpeted challenge in return. Lalande boasted to his soul that he was seeking his foe; if it was the last stroke of his hand he wished it raised to taunt the white, oncoming devil.

Even the storm glimmer had faded when he felt the water

shoaling from his armpits to his waist. This was the west point, the highest; and here, with hands locked to the stoutest of the mangroves, he would have to let the sea boil over him as long as a strong man could—then go.

On the western high point at last, and nothing to see, nothing to feel but the submerged bushes and the earth dissolving so that he had to keep his feet moving to avoid each becoming the centre of a whirlpool.

"It is a storm," Lalande grunted. "Two white devils on this reef." He remembered seeing spaces of mirrored calm, peaceful coves over which they told him orange trees had bloomed in cottage yards of the reef dwellers. The sea had devoured the islands in a night, dug the hole, and lain down in it like a fed tiger. Lalande, crowded closer to the stouter thickets, put out his hand in the dark. He touched a wet, warm surface, heaving slightly.

The skin of a brute. He smoothed the hair in the rushing water, felt along. A wall of steely flesh broadside to the tidal wave. Lalande softly slipped his hand over the huge round of the flank. The water was swirling about them both —to the man's armpits now. Lalande knew. They were on the highest point, but ahead lay the shoal pass. The sea was eating away this point; what was left was sinking, flicked off into the meeting currents around Dautrive and swept inland. The island would be silt on some cane planter's back fields forty miles up the Mississippi delta within the week.

But for the last of his domain the lord of Dautrive was fighting with his last foothold. The white devil of the sea was doing what man could not do. Lalande laughed in the blackness. The stallion could not feel his soft touch in all that beating welter of sand and débris churning around him. He rested his arm across the unseen back—the brute would think it was a driftwood branch. The man stepped forward. There was no other foothold now, it seemed. He reached his hand to the shoulder, up to feel the stiff, wet mane. He laughed and patted the bulged muscles.

"We go, you and I," he grumbled. The mangroves were slatted out on the tiderush, tearing loose, reeling past them. "Eh, friend? The last——"

And then he knew that the horse had whirled, upreared

in the blackness with a scream of fury. Lalande sprang to the left, into deep, moiling water.

He felt the plunge of his foe just missing him once more. But another body struck him and then was whirled off in the meeting tides. He collided with a colt in the dark; and now he guessed that the white stallion's breed had been gathered on the refuge shielded to the last by his huge bulk against the inexorable seas.

They were gone now. There was no more foothold on Dautrive either for the exiles or the man who had come to subdue them. Lalande knew he must not go with the tidal wave. It was death anywhere out there. The water would rush fifty miles inland over the battered reefs. So he fought powerfully back to get a handhold on the mangrove thickets through a whirlpool of dissolving sand.

But the man could not breast those surges through the dark; he felt himself driven farther back in a tangle of foam and débris, and suddenly came a whip-like tightening about his legs. He was dragged under and out across the current until he fought down to grasp this thing that had him.

It was his throw-rope, the new and heavy line that he had brought to conquer the white stud that the island men feared. Lalande plunged up and along it. The rope was tight and surging athwart the drift. When he got his head above water he knew he was clear of the disintegrating sand point, overwhelmed by the rollers in the pass and stung by the spray, but moving.

An unseen guide, a mighty power was drawing aslant the inshore tide. Lalande hauled along until he felt the rhythmic beat of the stallion's stroke; along until he touched his flank. When he could put his hand to his long mane Lalande laughed. He hung there, and felt the brute plunge higher at this contact. Once, twice, and then the stud settled to his fight.

The lord of Dautrive could not shake him off nor rend him with teeth or hoof. He was being ridden through the blackness and the sea.

Lalande began shouting. He could not resist that impulse of defiance, the great horse had been merciless to him on the island, so now he howled at him whenever he could keep the salt water from his teeth.

"*Eh, bien!* Big fellow, you see I am here! If you go, I go! Lalande is with you—devil! Fight! Fight on; a man is on your back at last. A last ride, too, white devil!"

For he had no hope of anything except to be battered to a pulp by the driftlogs and wreckage in the pass or drowned over the flooded marshes. But the stallion would not give to the northward tide, always he kept fighting to windward and westerly. When he plunged on these tacks Lalande swung out straight over his back, but clinging lightly and calling his taunting courage to the brute.

"The west ridge," muttered the rider. "He knows that—the oaks and the clay soil. If anything hangs together in this sea it will be that."

So he clung in the dark. Nothing but the incessant battles of the horse's broadside in the hurricane tide kept that feeling in Lalande's heart that the swimmer was trying to cross the pass to Rojas's oak grove. The white devil was blind in the white sea, but he remembered that. Lalande could feel the leg strokes steady and true even when the waves lifted or buried them, or when they were half drowned in the whipped foam among patches of reef wreckage. The man was fighting at this débris to keep it from the stallion's neck when he felt something else streaming along his flanks. It appeared to be submerged bushes or thick, long grass twisting about beneath them. And there was a changed note to the hurricane's tumult.

Lalande swung up on the stallion's back, listening. The swells of the pass were slower here, huge and strangling, but not with the fierce rush they had battled. The horse was swimming more to seaward, almost head on now, and once he arose as if his forefeet had struck the earth.

"He has found the marsh," muttered Lalande. "Night of wonders; nothing else!"

Still that powerful, steady stroke under the man's clinging limbs. The brute was seeking whatever land might be above the water. Then Lalande began to think, as again he felt the forefeet touch bottom.

"Then we fight again, eh, tiger? Shake me off and come at me! Make the oaks and we'll see!"

The horse plunged past a torn oak stump which smashed him in the side. He was in water to his withers, but Lalande

knew he was climbing. He got a foothold, leaned against the tide rushing through the oak grove, and kept on. Against the man and horse there crushed another trunk, denuded of leaves, swinging by its roots, staggering them with its blows. The sea was over this also, Lalande knew. If it came higher there was no hope here.

Then the stallion stopped. He stood belly deep in the lee of another oak trunk which Lalande could feel in the utter dark. And the man sat silent astride the white king of Dautrive who had lost his domain and his subjects. He moved his legs across the heaving flanks—a sort of stealthy challenge. He wanted the white stud to know that he, Joe Lalande, was there astride him. He laughed and leaned to pat the unseen arch of the neck.

And then again came that furious, uprearing plunge of the great brute. His head came about in a side blow, his teeth tearing at Lalande's face as the rider swerved out under this twisting, maddened attack. He heard that trumpet cry again of the wild horse seeking him as he dragged himself about the oak tree in the water. He stood clutching the rope, trying to make out the brute's form.

Then he knew that the swells riding through the twisted oaks were slowed; the yelling of the winds more fitful, higher; and a sort of a check came to the clutch on his body against the tree. Lalande seemed to stand in a frothy eddy as if the sea had stopped running and was foaming to an apex about him. And he knew what it meant, the moment that always comes in the Gulf hurricanes. The wind was dying off and changing. The sea could do no more. It had piled its flood as far inland and as high as even its strength could hold. Its whirling centre was now over the coast, the wind whipping fitfully, now southwest, westerly, northward, and beginning to rise again. But there came one moment when it was almost a calm, silence except for that roaring in the sky.

"*La revanche*," muttered the man. "Now comes the worst—the rush of the tide back to sea. The good God help them all, these Cajans who have not found refuge up the bay. *La revanche*—that is when they die!"

He felt about his oak trunk, wondering if it were still rooted firmly. The white stallion must be just about the torn branches, for Lalande still had the trailing line. And then

came something that numbed him with uncanny fear. A voice out in the dark, a child's cry among the oaks.

"*La revanche! Grandpère*, it is coming! Get the lines the other way. *Grandpère*——"

Lalande went plunging toward the spot. "*Nom de Dieu!* It is not possible? Rojas!" He shouted, and stumbled among wreckage of trees and timbers around his waist. "Rojas, you are in the grove?"

A dim light glowed behind a blanket. He saw a boy had snatched this moment of the falling wind to try the lantern. When Lalande waded to the spot an old man straightened up on the other side of a sunken raft. Upon it, under the blankets, were lashed the forms of Rojas's children, the orphans of Emile, who had once sought to tame the white horse of Île Dautrive. Old Rojas held the lantern close to his white beard. He seemed as frightened as was the small boy by the stranger's coming.

Old Rojas had been trying to spike a cross-piece to his shattered raft. His lugger had been smashed in the first reach of the hurricane, and he had torn up the planks of his camp floor to build this refuge anchored to the biggest oaks of the grove. They knew what to do, these Cajans of the reefs, when they were caught by the hurricane tide. Cut the mast from the lugger and drift inland, seize an anchorage before the dreaded *revanche* took them seaward; or if not that, hang to one's oak stumps!

Lalande did not waste the precious moments with a single question.

"A brave fight, old man. I see you made a brave fight! Give me your raft-lines. The other way around now, and to the stoutest trees. This sea, it is like a mad tiger when it has to go back defeated! Come." He took the mooring-line and plunged off in the waist-deep froth.

"Day of wonders!" mumbled old Rojas. "A man on the reef—living! A big man, strong after the hurricane! It is impossible." He went on hammering his raft as it surged and plunged by his shoulders, ordering the youngster to make himself fast once more in the life-ropes which held them all to the shaking planks. There was no whimper from the four children. They raised big dark eyes staring from *Grandpère* to the strange man who was battling back in the first seaward

rush of the waters to make them fast against *la revanche.* The wind was smiting again. It appeared to fall out of the blackness to the north, blast after blast, rising swifter, smiting the piled-up waters, hurling them over the reef islands with thrice the speed they had come in.

The dim lantern went out. The fugitives tied themselves in again. If the worn lines held and the raft kept together they might live. "Name of Names!" grumbled old Rojas. "A man coming to us out of the sea? He said he would make fast for us. If not, my children—well, we must trust him."

Lalande had struggled off into the new rush of the wind with the raft-lines. They were frayed and ragged. He made them fast to his own new throw-rope. He would get this rope off the stallion somehow, and make it fast to the big oak. If not—he shrugged, well, then, nothing! Every wreck of a lugger, plank of a camp, driftlog, tree, that was loose would be miles in the open Gulf to-morrow to eddy endlessly in *la revanche.*

The old man's mooring-lines would not reach the big oak. Lalande had thought that, combined, they might last the night out, but the sea and wind were whipping fast on him in the dark. He had to plunge out shoulder deep to the tree, feeling of his line.

"The white devil is there and quiet," he grumbled. "If he would let me slip the rope from his shoulders and tie to the tree!" He breasted the brimming tides over the submerged isle past the oak, his hand cautiously out to the dark. "Devil!" he called softly. "This is for Emile Rojas's young ones. The rope, devil! We've fought, you and I, but now let me have it."

The line was tight past the oak stump. The weight of the raft was already coming strongly on it as the tide began to seethe through the shattered grove. Lalande could hardly keep his feet, or his eyes open against the bitter spray. Then he was off his feet; he was hanging to the line, fighting out on it, calling to his foe, reaching for him. The brute must be swimming now, for the footing had gone from under them both.

Lalande felt a plunging on the line. It was too late now to hope to get the rope to the oak. The fighting horse was on it, and it began to give slowly past the man's hands. *La*

revanche was bearing them on, the raft, the man, and the white devil who was its sole anchor now. Lalande clung with one arm to the oak and drew in on the line. The dead weight of the raft had its way. The bucking, plunging brute, now touching the ground, now surging in the tide, was being drawn to him. Lalande began to call again. He had a great sense of pity for the stud. There were things that could not be withstood even by his lion heart; yet even the sea might not conquer except for this choking drag of the raft that held Rojas's grandchildren.

Lalande touched the stallion's muzzle now, coming on fighting with the obstinate ferocity of a white shark. He crouched in the crotch of the oak and held out his arms to the stallion's neck. When finally the brute crashed upon the sunken oak, Lalande reached his fingers to the cleft where the throw-rope cut into his neck. He dragged on the line, vainly trying to ease that tension. Once he thought of his knife; he might cut that choking grip from the white stud's throat. Then Lalande lay back in the crotch above the plunging hoofs and eased the great head above his own shoulder. Dragging on the line with all his power he kept up his whispering as the hurricane tide rushed under them, swinging the oak on its roots, twisting it seaward, and sucking the earth away in whirls where Rojas's house had stood.

"I tell you we are still here, you and I," called Lalande after a while. "You and I, devil! You and I—smashed up together, my face against your own! *Eh, bien!* Be quiet, Emile Rojas may be watching his children, and you in this storm! Remember that, white devil, you have returned for them!" He laughed and shouted in the dark, his arm about the neck of the horse working his fingers under the rope, trying to take some of the strain upon his own flesh and bone. And presently he grumbled, "and remember, also, I am not a thief. Not a thief, eh?"

They clung that way five hours, until the crest of *la revanche* was passed. The sun even got through the huge rifts of black clouds streaming south by the time old Rojas stirred about from his creaking raft in the scrub oaks. Everywhere a brown, dirty, sullen sea setting out, flecked with drift and wreckage; and of all Île Dautrive nothing showed but these few battered, branchless trees.

The stout old man waded waist-deep from his raft where now Emile's young ones sat up stiff and drowsy from the sea's nightlong flailing. He followed his mooring-line out to where it sogged under water by the big oak. The eldest boy had stood up looking after him.

"*Grandpère!*" screamed the lad suddenly. "Look! The white horse has come! By the tree, with the man!"

Old Rojas waded and struggled there, too astounded to speak. The sight was a queer one, indeed. The white horse was drawn against the oak-crotch, pinned in there, in fact; and the rope from his neck also crushed the strange man against his shoulder. Joe Lalande appeared to be crucified against the satin coat of the stallion. But he lifted his free arm faintly when the old man floundered near them.

"M'sieu?" gasped Rojas. "You here?" He had to touch Lalande's drenched body ere he would believe that the man lived. Then he fell to loosening the slacked rope so that Lalande lurched down from the horse's neck into the water where he could hardly stand but clung to the tree trunk watching the animal. The rope had cut through Lalande's arm and shoulder until it made a long red-scarred mark from neck to elbow. He could not speak for a time from his salt-swollen lips.

"Yes, I am here," he whispered at last, and staggered weakly.

"Name of God, the white horse!" cried the old man. He put his hand out to touch the smooth side, but as if fearing him even now. Lalande was trying to discover whether or not the heart of the white stallion still beat; and then he turned away, his eyes closing wearily. He seemed to be shaken by a sob, a grief that the islander could not comprehend.

"What's the matter, M'sieu? We are safe; the boats will find us. *Le bon Dieu!* that was a storm! I have never seen a greater on this reef!"

Then he looked curiously at the still form of his old enemy. "*Eh, bien!* It took a white sea to kill this white devil, my friend!"

"It was not the sea," grumbled Lalande. "The touch of a rope on his neck, M'sieu. I saw his heart break last night, but it was for the children of Emile. A rope and the touch

of my hand upon his neck, they were not to be endured, M'sieu." Then Lalande turned away, as if speaking to the lord of Dautrive against the tree: "At least you must know this, white devil, the hand on you was not the hand of a thief."

OLD PETER TAKES AN AFTERNOON OFF

By O. F. LEWIS

From *Popular Magazine*

WE HAD in the class of '06 in Huntington College the best varsity pitcher in the history of the institution, and in that year every last one of us fellows was proud to address him as "Old Peter." To-day, fifteen years after, the students about the campus know him by the one nickname of the "Old Simp."

But they are putting a curious tone into the name these days. His hair is partly gray, he's the dryest thing that ever got a toe hold on the faculty of the college, and his classes are the limit for arid atmosphere. Until the middle of last September no one would have believed at the college that the Old Simp would ever make a dent even in a mould of lemon jelly. But that was before Peter took an afternoon off, down in New York.

Old Peter's name is Peter Simpkins. He came to college from up in Holton Crossroads, Vermont, and "Hoddy" Irving, our aged Latin professor, friend of all the freshmen, took him of course under his wing and pulled him through the first year of homesickness. These latter years the college has long since given up trying to figure out what hit Old Peter after his final triumphant season in baseball when at the close of his great senior year the world seemed to lie before him because of his extraordinary career as our leading varsity pitcher. I know of two good bids he had to go into business, and one of the scouts of the Giants made him a corking offer to join that team the season after college was over.

But in the fall of '06 Old Peter turned up again at Hunting-

ton as tutor in Hoddy Irving's Latin department, all the pep gone out of him. And it stayed out. In time, after they had turned Old Hoddy out to pasture on a slim pension, Peter slipped noiselessly into the older man's chair in Latin. And then gradually the young co-eds, watching the half-shabby, prematurely gray, loose-jointed man going up the hill to his classes in Holbrook Hall as the autumn leaves fell romantically over him from the elms, pondered the fixed tradition that some college widow, back there, had thrown Old Peter down so hard that it broke his back and he never got up again. My idea was different. I believed that Peter loved Hoddy Irving as a son loves his father and that he just came back to *him* after graduation.

Anyhow, there he was! Peter's social status continued to be "unmarried," with no show of a change. He was notoriously wedded to his self-appointed life work, which was nothing less than some thirteen hundred pages of double-spaced manuscript, entitled: "The Early Customs of the Mound Builders of Huntington County." For fifteen years, ever since Peter had gone suddenly dotty on this piece of research for which he was going to get some time a Ph. D. from some college or other when the thing was all done and published, he had been meeting his Latin classes with undeviating regularity; but between classes he was forever, with ceaseless devotion and single-track mind, occupying this virgin field of exploration. His sparse conversation with others teemed with references to Huntington County's mound builders and he was rarely invited to dinners or other peppy events like the college dances.

Toozling parties, wandering through the woods about the college, sometimes met Old Peter abruptly and would draw apart hastily with flushed countenances. But the Old Simp didn't seem to notice anything out of the ordinary. He was on the trail of a mound builder. His classes bored the students stiff but they were compulsory like chapel. However, from time to time, some reference in the classroom to the times back in 1902 to 1906 would bring out an unexpected, human, quizzical smile about the lips of Old Peter and some tender, loyal story of the old times and the old boys. Then the beastly recitation would go on.

He occupied year after year a small room in Mrs. Tom

Black's boarding house and never went to athletic games but plugged on the mound builders. The boys said they'd see his light going sometimes almost all night. Seniors said his life badly needed the touch of a woman's hand; his clothes were shockingly old and unpressed and his hair was a sight. They said about the college that he was supporting an aged mother somewhere or had an insane sister and they didn't see how he managed to do it at all on his salary.

We come to the hour of two-fifteen on a certain afternoon of last September. Old Peter sat in the office of the editor-in-chief of the publishing house of Winthrop Forbes on lower Fifth Avenue. Peter was slowly folding up his "Mound Builders" in heavy Manila wrapping paper. Jim Sexton, of the class of 1906 of Huntington College, now editor-in-chief of Winthrop Forbes, held his forefinger on the twine.

Jim put his hand on Old Peter's thin knee.

"Peter, old scout, that's the honest truth! There's not sufficient market for a work like yours, wonderful as it is. We can't print that sort of thing at a loss, particularly in these days. Perhaps some foundation might take it or a college press or some scientific body or——"

Peter's big sunken eyes lifted, to rest on Jim's features. He had tried eleven other publishing houses before finally coming to the college friend of the old days. Jim's grip tightened on the bony knee. He couldn't go on. Old Peter had been self-revealing to Jim Sexton—had revealed the growing, ghastly conviction in the professor's soul that what he had toiled all these years to give to the world the world couldn't use and therefore didn't want.

"You see, Peter," said Jim Sexton, haltingly, "if you'd only brought me a baseball yarn or some sport story—something, for instance, that our juvenile department could use—you were such a whale of a good pitcher back there—— Ever tried a novel—for boys?"

Peter shook his head.

Presently Sexton accompanied him down the curving marble stairs to the first floor then past the long rows of tables stacked with Winthrop Forbes's latest books—where Peter had dreamed that his "Mound Builders" might rest next

year. Out upon the Avenue he went. In his pocket was Jim Sexton's card.

"Come and see me, Peter, before you go back to Huntington! Be sure to ring me up beforehand!" had urged Sexton

Revelation surged over Peter. All through these same fifteen years Jim Sexton, the laughed-at fat boy of the class of 1906, had been hewing his way through to the head position in the house of Winthrop Forbes. Peter stumbled up the Avenue. Under his arm bulged the Manila-wrapped manuscript. Cold truth beat down on him like a trip-hammer. He saw these unending crowds as if for the first time. These throngs of young girls, twenty years, fifteen years younger than he, dangling light furs even on this warm day, descending from limousines, passing with unseeing eyes, swinging down the street two and three abreast, rich, self-confident, ignoring his existence! The prosperous, self-sufficient people in the busses! Success, wealth, everywhere!

A ponderous, highly coloured woman emerged from a dog shop with a barking animal under her arm. "My dear, I got him preposterously cheap! Only four twenty-five! I made them come down from six hundred."

"You certainly did, my dear! I paid seven hundred for Toto and now he's gone and caught distemper!"

Old Peter's eyes fell upon the crowded dining room of the Waldorf and noted a young girl seated by the window, picking daintily and hesitatingly at some choice morsel—the waiter hovering with concerned look behind her chair. Peter sensed that he was hungry. In a white-tiled lunchroom he found a chair far back from the front door. A sentence of Jim Sexton's rang in his ears:

"Take an afternoon off, Peter! If I didn't have the weekly conference of our editors this afternoon you and I'd get in eighteen holes at Windemere. You don't play golf? Well, take an afternoon off, anyway, Peter!"

Old Peter ate his baked beans and apple pie. An overwhelming loneliness swept over him. He shivered slightly, intermittently. A dread of facing the people on the Avenue came upon him. He grew conscious that two young fellows, seated in adjacent chairs, were heatedly discussing some matter. Dully he began to listen, staring unseeingly at the elaborate bill of fare on the highly polished wall.

"Betcher the Bambino knocks another homer this afternoon!"

"Betcher he don't knock no homer this afternoon!"

"Betcher five!"

"You're on!"

"Betcher Shawkey pitches!"

"Betcher Hoyt pitches!"

The two men went out, leaving behind them an early afternoon paper. Old Peter reached slowly for it. Weary and sick at heart, his eyes fell upon the smiling face of "Babe" Ruth and under it the caption: "The Highest-Priced Ball Player in the World!"

Old Peter paid his twenty-cent check to the fat-faced cashier with the billowing blonde hair and the lurid lips.

"Could you inform me, please, where the Polo Grounds are?" he asked. "Is that the place where they play baseball this afternoon?"

The stately person withdrew the toothpick from her lips. She looked at Peter meditatively. Her expression grew kindly. She tilted forward in her chair, glanced at the clock.

"Some big town this, isn't it? You just got time. Go one block west, and take the 'L' going north. Follow the crowd on the train. Better sit over behind third base, about five rows from the bottom if you can get a seat; there's more seats empty there this late."

Old Peter's eyes opened wide. "Do *you* ever go?"

"Not to-day, thanks! Do I ever go? Does Babe Ruth bat left-handed? You bet I go! And you'd better get a move on now!"

The next man in line pushed Peter forward impatiently.

"Take an afternoon off!" said the blonde cashier a bit sharply.

She watched Old Peter's slow disappearance through the door, then looked wisely at the thin, sallow-faced man who was paying his check, shook her head, and elevated her eyebrows. A third man, coming up shortly to pay his bill, passed a Manila-wrapped package over to the woman.

"The guy what went out left it in his chair!"

The cashier shoved the package under the counter and punched the cash register. When business grew quieter she reached under the counter and examined the writing on the

package. Then she stared out upon Fifth Avenue, her forehead puckered.

"What the hell is mound builders?" she murmured.

While Old Peter was wedged tightly among the billowing throng of ticket seekers that moved spasmodically toward some invisible gates in front of them he discovered that his manuscript was gone! Henceforth, for some minutes, the mass of rocking, surging, grunting men bore Peter's body along with them on legs that moved automatically. His mind was chasing frantically backward, through the train, through the streets, finally seeking a white-tiled lunchroom! His soul was falling into an abyss of despair. The duplicate copy at Huntington didn't have the last seven chapters on the newly discovered mounds at Chatham, nor the annotations in red ink!

Peter tried to draw out of the crowd, like a fish that feels the hook for the first time. Squeezed against the street fence, half crushed, he was shot ultimately through a gate into the backwaters of comparative calm inside the grounds. Long-forgotten shouts met his ears:

"*Score* cards! Get your *score* cards! Only correct batting order of the game! Get your hot peanuts, five a bag! Here y'are, *red* hot, *red* hot!"

Sudden, vivid memories crowded into his mental vision. Those great afternoons, back in 1906, at Soldiers' Field, Yale Field, Franklin Field! The afternoons he had pitched the little freshwater-college team to victory—old Huntington, that had come down out of the woods and licked the biggest college teams in the whole country! The only year old Huntington had ever pulled it off!

"*Hot* peanuts! *Red*-hots, *red*-hots! Ice-cold lemon*ade!*"

That's what Old Peter had heard them selling in the stands fifteen years before! The marvellous sequence of his victories passed before him. He put his hand to his eyes. He straightened up. His lips parted. The crowds before him were hurrying to secure their belated seats in the stadium of the Polo Grounds. He saw in memory other crowds, back there, surging to their feet upon the bleachers, waving the light blue of Huntington, dancing and prancing, singing the college hymn, shouting shrilly while the college band blared

out "Fair Huntington" and the gang cheered itself hoarse behind the rocking, twisting cheer leaders! He remembered with a strange thrill the snake dance they did across John Harvard's field! The score itself flashed across his eyes: Huntington 5, Harvard 4! Eleven innings!

Old Peter moved on toward the towering structure of the stadium. He could see nothing of the field as yet but he heard the crack of a bat in the stillness—the immediate howl of the mob. A thrill went up and down his spine. *The crack of the bat!* He pulled a long, long breath into his lungs. He felt his toe digging once more down into the dirt of the front of the mound. He felt himself winding up; out of the corner of his eye he threw a glance at the man playing off first base; he shot again that famous in-drop that broke just before it reached the plate! He saw again the crowd, *his* crowd of rooters, rush down out of the bleachers, dash upon the field, raise him precipitously to their shoulders, bear him triumphant off the field. The crowd he *belonged* to!

Peter, alone in New York, belonging to nobody, walked almost gropingly toward the lower grand-stand seats. The full view of the arena burst upon him and he paused, with shortened breath. No such sight as this came out of his memory! Endless rows of people—and endless faces! Upstairs, just the same. People out on the bleachers, also!

Over all hung an almost absolute stillness. It was a crowd stiffened into stone. Only the white-coated venders of soft drinks plied like small butterflies in and out of the mass, in the distance.

"What—is it?" asked Peter, half under his breath, of a man in the crowd in front of him. The man spoke, finally, without turning.

"Babe Ruth's up! Two on bases, one out, and——"

Crack!

There broke on the world a roar of sound. Countless backs of people surged upward in front of Peter; arms gesticulated madly with wild contortions. Down came a hand on a straw hat. The roar continued, died down, billowed, came to a climax. He visioned a heavy man with an amiable smile circling the bases. Slowly the mob before him resumed their seats.

The crack of the bat! Half breathlessly, Old Peter sought

to discover a seat in this immense throng. Behind the last row of seats in the very back of the stadium he paused to glimpse between the shoulders and the heads of the crowd in front of him the delivery of the gray-uniformed pitcher in the box. He saw the squatting catcher, the bent-over umpire, the field, all curiously foreshortened in perspective. He lost himself in the marvellous control of the man in the pitcher's box.

He began to forecast his every motion.

"It'll be an inshoot! An out-drop! He'll groove this one!"

Peter's heart thumped, his cheeks burned, the perspiration stood on his forehead. He burst into a shrill yell when a third strike-out was scored. People about him turned sharply. He was cheering the opposing pitcher. Peter pulled an enormous breath. He remembered that there were eight innings more and that the cashier had said he ought to sit behind third base.

Ten minutes later, tucked away in a seat in the sun, about nine rows from the aisle just behind the boxes lining the field, infinitesimal part of the thirty thousand human beings at the Polo Grounds, Peter sat in the great broad outer air of the amphitheatre, saw the players, commanded the wide sweep of the living throngs of people, and felt as though he were also on the field. Again came to him that long-forgotten sensation of being out there in the pitcher's box himself—the feeling that these crowds were watching *him*, *his* game, *his* team. He felt strange shivers run up and down his spine. Into his right arm seemed to come the craving to pitch, to cut the edge of the plate—to fool the batsman——

Then there rolled over him again, like a crushing machine, the inexorable fact of his disaster. Fate had done this day her absolute worst—but he was still alive! His work of fifteen years had been turned down, irrevocably. No Ph. D. for him! No alignment of him, Peter Simpkins, Ph. D., among the scholars of America. His very life task he had himself ignominiously lost somewhere—and he didn't know where to find it. Financially, he was also a dismal failure. He didn't have a hundred dollars in the bank. Jim Sexton had pitied him—all the editors had pitied him. At the college, he knew, they called him the "Old Simp." He had

borne it so long as he knew that ultimately he would confute all his critics with the publication of his epoch-making work on the mound builders. But to-day—and forever from now on—he *was* an old simp. The cashier in the cheap restaurant had pitied him. A bald-headed man in the crowd outside the grounds had made fun of him while they stood there. Others in the crowd had laughed at him.

Peter's fists clenched. It was all over! He'd done his best for fifteen years. He raised his eyes about at a level with the top of the grand-stand. His teeth pressed upon his lower lip. He shouted mentally to himself:

"I'm through! Damned if I don't take an afternoon off—from myself and—and everything else!"

Then, with an enormously long breath and with arms outstretched for an instant, Peter threw off violently the whole horrible past. He stood up as the inning closed and the other team took the field. He straightened up, surveyed the endless rows of people. The peanut man was tossing bags of peanuts to people sitting in the rows, in return for the coin tossed to him. Peter was mildly fascinated by the process. He found ten cents in his pocket, tossed it dexterously to the vender. Back came a bag, describing a wide arc. Peter caught it gracefully—the old automatic way of the natural ball player. A second bag came at him, unexpectedly, almost caught him napping. He caught it with the same hand, heard someone shout: "Two *out!*" and sat down smiling.

"You must 'a' played ball some time!" said a pleasant voice beside him. Peter looked up at a short, stocky, round-faced man of perhaps fifty, eying him genially. A warm, mellow feeling seemed to flow through Peter. He wanted to talk to somebody, to be *with* somebody.

"I played ball in college—Huntington College, back in nineteen-five and nineteen-six. Pitched. Won't you have some peanuts?"

The stocky, round-faced man seemed to bore Peter with his eyes. His fat hand dug automatically into the paper bag extended by Peter. He said nothing, munched peanuts, watched meditatively the preliminary tossing of the ball across the diamond. Peter wondered what he had done to offend him.

Then the man turned abruptly to Peter. "Your name's Simpkins!"

Peter's breath stopped; his lips opened wide; he looked thoroughly frightened. The fat man chuckled and grinned. "You pitched against Harvard, didn't you?—beat 'em. And Yale? Sure you did! Say, you were *some* pitcher, boy! And Johnny McGraw was after you! Course I remember! Well, well!"

Never in Peter's existence had such a marvellous thing happened to him! Half fearfully he shot a glance at the people around him. Several men in the row behind were listening intently—gazing at him, Peter, with keen eyes. "How'd—how'd you know?" stammered Peter.

The stocky little man tapped his forehead solemnly. "Memory, son! Newspaper man all my life. Covered baseball nearly thirty years; big college games earlier; the big league now. Got an afternoon off—and see what I do! Come right up here! Remember you because you pitched so much like Matty—headwork, you know! Never forget. Well, well! What you doing now?"

"I'm teaching—at Huntington. And I'm—publishing a work on the mound builders of Huntington County—that is, I'm—I lost the manuscript to-day——"

The third inning had begun.

"Know these players?" softly asked the newspaper man from behind a chunky cigar. Peter shook his head timidly but with tingling nerves. No such praise had been his in years! Then began a wonderful adventure for the Old Simp. Familiarly and almost uninterruptedly this man of complete knowledge of baseball unfolded to the lonely, friendless Peter not only the names and histories of the men before him but also, as the game went on, much of the inside stuff in baseball that had developed since Peter's time.

For emphasis the newspaper man now and then rested his hand upon Peter's knee. He called these men by their first names, he associated with them, he knew their salaries, their foibles, their strength, their humanness. Peter was in a dream. This man was treating him not only like a human being but with something more than that in his tone.

"Son," he said, between innings, "tell you something funny! Always wanted to be able to play ball—pitch, like

you—that's why I remembered you all these years! My dream never came true. Simpkins, you might be out there right now—managing one of those teams—man with your brains—after you'd lost your wing. Might perhaps be still pitching. Still, you did best, probably. Tell me about this mound-builder stuff!"

Peter told him, with a certain mixture of emotion and bravado. He mustn't show the man the whole truth of his abysmal failure. While Peter went on, the newspaper man said nothing; just looked Peter in the eye, understandingly; nodded occasionally. When Peter came to the story of the loss of his manuscript his voice wavered. "So perhaps I ought to—have gone into baseball, you see!" ended Peter with a rueful smile.

The newspaper man hit Peter on the back, none too gently. "You're all right, son! Buck up! Something'll come to you. You watch!"

Something did come, at that very moment. High into the air shot a foul, off the bat of a left-handed batter. Instinctively the people in the seats about Peter rose, measuring with quick eye the probable arc of the falling ball. Peter found himself standing, shading his eyes with one hand from the sun, gluing his vision upon that descending sphere.

"Look out there! Catch it! Look out, lady!"

Down came the ball, but not so soon as Peter had at first thought. Would it come to him? Waving, clutching hands on all sides reached for it. Someone shoved him roughly aside but he regained his equilibrium. He thrilled with the old feel of the diamond!

"Take it, son!" he heard a voice shout.

"It's *mine!*" yelled Peter.

Smack! The ball was Peter's. Not for anything would he have muffed it. The sting of pain was for a moment intense but he clung to the ball. Wildly clutching hands sought to wrest it from him but he held it fast. The crowd receded from him. Erect, he stood recovering his poise. Then he threw the ball with quick and powerful sweep of his arm far out upon the diamond, so that it was caught by the catcher near the home plate.

Murmurs rose from the stand. Such a return of a ball was unusual. People generally kept the balls they secured and

fooled the policeman when he sought the culprit. But such a throw, low, straight as an arrow, from way behind third base! It would easily have caught a man running in from third! Who was this guy in the grand-stand? Sporadic applause burst from the seats. A Polo Grounds crowd is always looking for a new sensation.

"Put him in! Let him pitch!" shouted someone behind Peter.

People laughed. Peter went fiery red, The newspaper man pulled at his coat tail. Peter's arm ached. He hadn't thrown a ball like that since he left college. But as the men around him jollied him now, asking what big league he belonged to and kidded him for not keeping the ball and all that, Peter glowed with the joy that had not been his since college days, of being the centre of an achievement! For it had been an extraordinary catch, followed by a surprising throw.

So he found himself talking easily, familiarly even, with the newspaper man and with others round about. The newspaper man told the people near him who this chap really was that had caught the ball—an old college man who had had the chance to sign up with the Giants and had turned it down! Peter was being vouched for by an authority! Peter bought thereupon a half-dozen ice-cream cones and gave them joyously to his neighbours.

"Have a cigar, sir?" said a young man to him most respectfully.

Every little while the newspaper man emitted a series of quiet chuckles.

"Take you round to see McGraw some time!" he said. "How'd you like to be a scout for the Giants—looking up new timber—college teams—bush leaguers? Pay you twice as much as you're getting now! Might find some new mound builders, too!"

In the midst of his growing bewilderment at this unprecedented afternoon in which he had suddenly blossomed forth as a personage he became gradually aware that people near him were staring in his direction, pointing toward him, and that some men in the distance were standing, craning their necks. At first he thought himself the continued object of attention. But no! He glanced to his right. For the first

time he discovered that there was sitting next to him a young woman—and that this young woman was smoking a cigarette! As he looked with wide-opened eyes at her she drew the cigarette slowly from her very red lips, and smiled at him.

"You made a bully catch, buddy!" she said. "You're sure some little life-saver! Thought I was gone!"

Peter had no answer. This young woman was not like any of the co-eds at Huntington College! And smoking in public! In a grand-stand! He looked beyond her for her escort. There was none. Two boys only—clearly not belonging to her. Peter stammered words. She eyed him keenly, tossed her head slightly, blew puffs of smoke into the air. Shouts came from near by.

"Sit down! Down front there!"

More people were rising to their feet. What was a common sight in restaurant or home seemed astonishing and noteworthy here. Surge after surge of human waves billowed up. It was between innings. People wanted to see the fight, if there was one. Those who couldn't see anything were the most excited. Perhaps they were firing gamblers from the Polo Grounds! Good-humouredly the crowd struggled to discover what was going on. In the centre of this crowd, seated, were the highly painted woman with the defiant cigarette—and Peter.

From somewhere came the words to his ears: "Gee, he's got some classy jane with him, that ball player!" There was more laughter. Remarks were bandied about, regarding the woman who was smoking. Peter saw her colour change even under the rouge and paint. The remarks about her became more pronounced, the laughter more boisterous. Peter felt strangely about her. She was not old; this demonstration of brutal male callousness and curiosity, this lack of chivalry toward womankind, stirred some deep sense of anger and injustice in Peter. A man behind the young woman had just extended a silver cigarette case to her over her left shoulder.

"Have an imported one, girlie!"

Peter jumped to his feet.

"You—you people quit that!" he shouted. "You let this —lady alone. I don't believe—in women smoking—but this lady's alone and I——"

Peter knew he was being drawn rapidly into unknown fields of action. Never before had he dared to depart so from the orderly conduct of life. He found himself shaking with excitement, with something he couldn't control. What was he going to do next? He caught the eye of the young woman looking up at him. She expected him to get her out of this thing; that was clear.

"Sit down!" he shouted. "You let this lady alone!"

Someone pulled at his coat, dragging him to his seat. It was the newspaper man. But from the row of seats in front of him a hoarse laugh broke. Peter caught sight of a husky, black-haired, thickset man standing and pointing derisively at the woman. He looked straight at Peter.

"Lady?" He paused. "You know this—lady?"

The intonation in his voice was clear, even to Peter.

"And as for you," the man continued, "you hick, you keep your big feet out o' my back from now on, see? Diggin' your toes into me all the time! Think I'm a doormat?"

"I didn't put your feet in my back—I mean my feet in your back!" stammered Peter, excitedly.

The crowd gave a joyful laugh. Things were coming along great!

The heavy-jawed man scowled, almost burying his eyes in the thick folds of flesh. He brushed the back of his coat ostentatiously. "What's that? Laughing at me? Why, you—you rube, I'd knock your block off for a quarter!"

"You would, would you?" retorted Peter, shrilly. He couldn't think of anything stronger to say. With each moment he wanted to do something more and more violent. Words were becoming so shallow. "And," said Peter, springing to his feet, "you take back what you—you meant about this—lady!"

Peter heard the hoarse laugh again and immediately felt a shock against his cheek and head such as he had only once before in life experienced—when he had fallen off the backyard fence in childhood and had hit upon his head.

The next instant Peter was transformed into a wild man. Madly, blindly, doggedly he laced into the man in the next row in front. He was no longer the Old Simp from Huntington College, a professor, a law-abiding citizen. He was crazy to pound, to tear, to strike, to destroy. All the pent-up

woe of persistent failure, all the nerve-racking days of the past weeks, all the half-conscious sense of inferiority to other people, all the depths of humiliation of the last hours, the irrevocable loss of his manuscript, the success of other men, the realization of what he might perhaps have been in baseball—all centred now in an elemental explosion of the physical and nerve forces within Old Peter.

The very blows that landed on him, the cruel punishment that he received from his antagonist seemed not to hurt him so much as to exhaust and in some way to assuage him. Now he was borne down between the seats, now he caught an arm and twisted it until a shriek of agony resulted, now he was almost suffocated by the grip of a hand on his throat—and at last, face and body aching violently, blood warm and wet running down over his eyes, he found himself dragged violently to his feet and out of the aisle, up steps and steps and steps, while round about him swirled human forms and round about him rose confused shouts and noises. Then he seemed to be dragged again, half on his feet, half sagging, a long, long way. His brain refused to work; he would go just where they carried him. He caught sight of blue sleeves and brass buttons.

Through the interminable night in the cell Peter sat with head buried much of the time in his hands. A filthy hobo; a lad of seventeen, wild for a shot of dope in his arm; an unpleasant individual who had been caught bootlegging and cursed the Government—these were Peter's cellmates.

Only one thing solaced Peter at all. He had not allowed to be dragged from him, in the night court, a few hours before, any clew as to who he was. He would never disgrace Huntington College! John Jones was the name he had given. They had remanded him for further examination in the morning. Assault and battery the charge was.

No one from the Polo Grounds had appeared against him save two policemen. Peter was aghast at what they had said about him! But all that was as nothing compared to his future! Prison? What was his future, if not prison? Nothing! He couldn't ever go back to Huntington now! Yet he was good for nothing else except teaching. Somewhere in Arizona, perhaps, or Alaska? His clothes were torn,

his face horribly swollen and tender, his shirt and collar streaked with dried blood, and his whole soul was sore.

Peter shuddered as the flickering light outside the cell revealed fitfully the sordid and unbelievable environment into which sudden fate had plunged him. The lad of seventeen seemed never to cease walking up and down the narrow cell, moaning for the heroin he craved or clamouring that Peter assure him he wouldn't be sent away to prison. The hobo rolled uneasily upon the bed and snored and in his sleep he persistently scratched his body. The bootlegger addressed remarks to nobody, in constant repetition.

Toward morning, Peter fell into a brief, troubled sleep.

Peter's turn in the courtroom had come. The blue-coated attendant beckoned to him, led him to a railing in front of the bench where the judge sat in his black gown. Since Peter had come into the courtroom he had kept his eyes firmly on the floor. He must go through with this horrible disgrace as best he could. But above all—not give in, not betray Huntington! John Jones—that's the name—don't forget!

Peter stood, his eyes on a small panel at the bottom of the wooden bench of justice before him. Somewhere above him the judge sat. He heard confused murmurs all about him. He had seen out of the corner of his eye a great courtroom filled with people.

The judge spoke—a gentle voice above him:

"You are Professor Peter Simpkins of Huntington College?"

Peter's shoulders rose heavily, fell, and his body sagged.

"Look up, professor, and follow the evidence!" Peter looked up, and saw a fugitive smile pass over the face of the clean-shaven, youthful man upon the bench. This was not the same judge as the one with the gray hair and the big moustache in the night court!

Peter listened dully to the two policemen going over the story again. But gradually he noticed that they were not saying the same thing they said last night. They didn't accuse him this morning of all that was bad and lawless! They just told how they arrived and found a fight going on and had arrested one of the fighters and how they couldn't find the other man.

Without comment, the judge dismissed them.

"Mr. Arthur Emerson!" he called.

Down the aisle of the courtroom came the sound of brisk steps and Peter saw a man seat himself in the witness chair. It was the newspaper man of yesterday.

The judge took from his desk a newspaper clipping perhaps a foot long. He showed the clipping to the witness.

"Mr. Emerson, did you write this newspaper account of Professor Simpkins and of the fight of yesterday which appeared in the *Morning Sphere* to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

"And this is an accurate account of—Professor Simpkins and of the circumstances leading up to the encounter for which the professor was arrested?"

"It is, your honour. I'd like to say, sir, that the *Sphere* likes once in a while to run a character story like that—human interest, you see—close to the hearts of the people. The way the old New York *Orb* used to do. And this Professor Simpkins yesterday—he made a wonderful story. I used to do that kind of thing for the *Orb*. And, your honour, may I say one thing more? I meant to look up the professor last evening and help him but I got word at the office that my wife had met with a slight accident. I rushed home—it just drove the professor right out of my mind—until this morning."

The judge bent over toward Peter and extended to him the clipping.

"Professor, have you seen this morning's *Sphere?*"

Peter, desperate with apprehension, shook his head. The whole thing in the newspapers! The college disgraced!

"Professor, read this article!" the judge continued. "And I want to say to you, sir, that I am personally proud of a man in these days who will run the danger of enduring even what you have endured for the sake of defending the fair name of a woman, even when, as in this case, she is a total stranger to him. Won't you please read the article through?"

Dumbly Peter took the clipping and began to read. There it all was, briefly but unmistakably tenderly told. The echoes of the old days, when he had pitched his great games; the catch he had made yesterday of the high foul—even the kidding on the grand-stand! There was the story of his

long throw to the catcher at the home plate and a remark made by one of the ball players about it after the game. There was the story of the altercation; and then the fight—and how this gentle professor from Huntington, specialist on mound builders, had fought like a cave man when attacked brutally by the man who insulted womankind in the person of the stranger next the gray-haired professor.

Oh, it was a story, all right!

Then something more happened. The judge rose and leaned over the bench. "Professor Simpkins," he said, "you are discharged—and honourably. You were not the aggressor but defended yourself as best you could against a bully. I regret that you should have suffered incarceration even for one night. And now, sir, permit me, as a graduate of Huntington College myself, of the class of 'nine, to thank you for what you did! My name is Billings. Don't you remember me?"

The lips of Peter quivered and the tears started. He groped for a handkerchief but found none. The judge passed him his own. The reporters, covering the court in anticipation of a story, scribbled industriously. Oh, boy! Stuff for the early afternoon editions!

Bang! The gavel sounded.

"Court adjourned for fifteen minutes!"

In the judge's private chamber stood four men. Peter, dishevelled to a positively disgraceful extent; Judge Billings, obviously proud of the fighting professor of Huntington College; Arthur Emerson, dyed-in-the-wool baseball reporter, who had landed a story; Jim Sexton, who had just come tearing up in his limousine, having read belatedly the *Morning Sphere.*

As they stood there, there was a discreet knock at the door.

"Come in," said the judge.

A court attendant showed the way to a large, fair-haired young woman with a Manila-wrapped bundle under her arm. Her eye fell upon the black robe of the judge. She addressed herself to him.

"Here's that 'Mound Builder' thing they wrote about in the *Morning*—— My God!"

She had caught sight of Professor Simpkins, not at all garbed at the moment to meet the fair sex.

"Peter," said Jim Sexton as the two rode in the closed car toward Jim's home where the professor was to be fitted out in human togs again, "Peter, old boy, I've got a pleasant little surprise for you. Two surprises, in fact. I telephoned up to Huntington this morning, as soon as I read that story in the *Sphere*, and told them I'd look out for you, of course. Lots of the boys had already read it, and I tell you, old man, they think you're all right! Know what they're going to do at twelve o'clock to-day? Ring the college bell for five minutes for scrappy Old Peter! How's that, old scout?"

Peter dug his teeth into his lower lip.

"And, Peter, the second thing is that we're going to publish your 'Mound Builders,' after all. You see, it's a lot different to-day. Think of the advertising you've gotten since yesterday! We can have thousands of copies of that story in the *Sphere* zinc etched. And you couldn't buy that kind of advertising for thousands of dollars——"

Peter blinked at Jim Sexton, lips wide open.

"It's all right, Peter, and now I want to ask you what you might write for us next. Something up to the minute, to follow up this book, you know?"

Peter was silent. Finally he spoke:

"I—I don't know, Jim!"

"Come, old man, think! Think! It's the psychological moment for you right now!"

Over Peter's battered countenance spread a broad and happy smile.

"I have it, Jim! Just the thing! There are a lot of mound builders that no one has done yet, over in Franklin County!"

IG'S AMOK

By GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

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MANSLAUGHTER and murder are variously regarded, but wherever civilization has risen to so much as a fig leaf, excepting always the Flowery Kingdom and the Kingdom of the Rising Sun, the gods of the place and the people who inhabit it have fixed their canons against self-slaughter. The white man who is bent on suicide simply disrespects these injunctions and kills himself; the black and brown peoples, more especially those who are of Malay descent, get around them.

When a man runs amok his object, nine times out of ten, is not to see how many people he can kill, but so to inflame public opinion that he will be cut down himself and spared the dubious hereafter of the suicide.

Ig had the wish neither to destroy himself nor to be destroyed by others. His house was commodious. It stood upon tall stilts over an estuary of tidal water. His pig stye stood next to it. There were plenty of mats in the house and plenty of pigs in the stye.

Ig's wife had more bright silk dresses and metal bracelets than the average wife, and there was no occasion so informal or ceremonious that Ig was not in a position to array himself fashionably for it. He nearly always had tobacco, and from the centre post of the house was suspended a treasure the like of which was not to be found even in the Sultan's Armoury.

It was a two-handed sword which a roving and adventurous ancestor of its present proprietor had brought home together with a couple of young princesses from an island far to the southward.

The idea of this sword was that if a powerful man laid on with it his enemy would fall to the ground in two pieces. But although Ig was by far the most powerful man of the men of Pauru he had never had occasion to unsheathe the frightful decapitator in anger and try it out.

Before you strike with the average sword you pull it out of its scabbard. But the sword from the island to the southward was sheathed on a different principle. The case was in two flat parts which were tied together at four points with fragile dried grasses. When you struck, therefore, the scabbard burst open and fell to the ground in the same number of pieces as your adversary.

Merely to heft the sword was to believe that its mechanical principles were sound and fatal. The back was thick and heavy; the edge, which could be perceived between the halves of the scabbard, was hideously sharp.

Ig, then, had everything that a man really needs to make him happy. Household goods, pigs, a wife, a fancy sword, health, youth, strength, and a mind which very seldom became too active for comfort. And he had begun his career as a married man without any nervous system whatever.

His wife Plu, however, though of good family—one brother was in the Sultan's privy council—was an insufferable scold, chatterer, and fault finder. Ig, in her quick, acquisitive eyes, could never do right.

After eight years of this his nervous system went suddenly to pieces. It was a balmy spring morning. Everybody ought to have been peaceful and happy. But Plu had waked while it was still dark and she had been scolding and finding fault ever since.

The first thing Ig knew he was lost in a red cloud. When he came out of it the scabbard of the ancestral sword lay on the floor at his feet in two pieces, and one piece of his wife lay in one corner of the house and the other piece of her lay in another.

When a white man weathers a homicidal brainstorm and returns to his senses he is more apt than not to beg the question of arrest and trial by jury by turning the smoking or reeking weapon which he still holds in his hand against himself. But Ig was not a white man, and he well knew that the ghosts of suicides are tormented throughout eternity by having

splinters of burning pitch pine continually thrust under the nails of their ten fingers and their ten toes. And even in the white man's Hell, according to Mr. Kelp, the missionary resident in Pauru, the punishment is of a fiery nature.

It was, however, out of the question for a man in Ig's really ignominious and provoking situation to go on living. The price of another wife in pigs, silks, and rubber would ruin him. And even if the severed woman could be duplicated it was doubtful if any respectable parent in the village would entrust the happiness of a daughter to a man who had made such a show of himself.

After all the cackle and chatter and scoldings of the last eight years the sudden silence in the house was appalling. The silence was not only to be noticed within the house, but without, and half an hour had not passed with Ig hectically trying to decide what he ought to do next when the ancient woman named Toto Shag remarked it.

Toto Shag lived in the nearest house on the right. In her youth she had been captured back in the forest where the river is only a spring at the root of a tree, and brought to Pauru in a Malacca cage. When she had been tamed and taught a few words of Pauru she had been taken out of the cage and initiated by the Sultan himself into the mysteries and delights of court life. But time withering her and custom stealing her charm, she had been pensioned and sent to live in a house which was just about as far from the Sultan's house as it was possible for a house to be. Remarking the silence that was upon the house of Ig, this old lady set out to ascertain the cause.

Ig, his mind in a fearful flurry of indecision, heard the sounds of her hands and feet upon the rungs of his house ladder and came to the conclusion that if anything was to be done it must be done at once.

When the withered head of Toto Shag, with its black forest eyes and its toothless mouth full of questions, appeared through the ladder opening in the floor of Ig's house, it must have been obvious even to the most casual observer that the life of such a mischievous old woman is preserved only at a great expense to the community in general. Her gold hair ornaments alone were worth the purchase money of a young and comely wife of good family.

The old woman's marvellous forest eyes began at once to seek out the dark corners of the house.

"Why the appalling silence, neighbour?" she asked.

Ig, still undecided but badly flustered, made no answer. Then Toto Shag perceived in the corner where it still lay the upper piece of Ig's late wife, and tittered.

There is such a thing as tittering at the wrong time and in the wrong place. And there is such a thing as tittering once too often. Toto Shag had committed all three of these solecisms.

Ig, perceiving that in a few moments his inexplicable folly would be common gossip, and almost in tears, grunted:

"I shall have to run amok. It cannot be otherwise."

And he swung the decapitator and smote.

The head of the old lady went hopping and bumping across the floor of the house and the rest of her went tumbling down the ladder, hung balanced for a moment on the landing stage, and then toppled off into the water with a quiet splash.

"Oh, dear—dear—dear!" thought Ig. "Now I *am* in for it."

Pauru, rich and powerful, had not been engaged in warfare for a generation. The Sultan and the war chiefs were fighters by tradition and not by practice. It would not be easy to provoke them into doing him a violence and putting an end to a life which was no longer fit to live, but he intended to do his best.

He first ate the entire bowl of rice and raw fish which the unfortunate Plu had been preparing for their joint morning meal, fed his pigs, dipped up a dozen buckets of salt water and sluiced down the gleaming mahogany floor of their stye, gathered the two pieces of his wife and the head of the old lady together in one place, covered them over with a second best mat, changed his white cotton loin cloth for a fringed one of scarlet silk, cleaned and polished the huge blade of the decapitator, and not without hesitation and embarrassment, for he was a shy man and easily confused, climbed down his house ladder to the landing stage and set off by the forest path for the more fashionable and popular parts of the village.

Ig's way led him past the house of Mr. Kelp the missionary. He knew that it would and he hoped that the missionary, who was forever pestering him about his gods and urging him to

change them, as lightly as you change breech cloths, wouldn't put in an appearance. But the missionary had a fenced-off yard in which he practised horticulture, and here Ig perceived him from afar doing woman's work with a hoe.

Ig sighed and hoped that he could get through his business with the missionary without any preliminary conversation, but even this hope was to be blasted.

Mr. Kelp perceived Ig, and approaching the fence leaned on it and accosted him.

"Why the best silk loin cloth and the great sword?"

Ig explained as best he could.

"I have divided my wife, Plu, into two parts," he said, "and the shame of it caused me in sheer desperation to sever the head of our respected neighbour, Toto Shag, from her body, and now my hand is raised against all men so that presently the hands of all men will be raised against me until the misery and confusion which I have brought upon myself may be ended forever."

So saying he swiped suddenly sidewise at Mr. Kelp the missionary; but that one ducking madly evaded the blow and fled squealing for his house, with Ig, who had leaped the fence, bounding at his heels and swinging the decapitator.

It had been part of Mr. Kelp's policy in dealing with native populations to plant in them the belief that his own particular bodily integrity and welfare were the particular and peculiar preoccupation of the gods whom he served and recommended, and Ig, therefore, had some reason to believe that his own death would be the instant result of killing or even harming the missionary. And so he pursued Mr. Kelp with all the zeal of a fanatic who seeks to deliver himself from oppression.

Mr. Kelp plunged into his house through the front door, which he sought to slam in the face of his pursuer, and almost instantly plunged out of it through the back. The frame of the latter caught the edge of the decapitator and saved him for the moment. He zig-zagged then, darted out at his front gate and fled with incredible speed along the forest paths toward the village. But his wind was not good, and if the gods whom he served and recommended really valued him it soon became high time for them to interfere in his behalf. His stride began to weaken and falter. He stubbed his foot against a stubborn root, fell, scrambled squealing to his feet,

lost his left arm at the shoulder and, an instant later, his head.

"And now," thought Ig with a sudden smile of relief, "my troubles are all over."

He stood breathing heavily, and wondered from what direction the doom, which he felt certain the gods of the white man were about to visit upon him, would approach.

But after half an hour of patient and hopeful waiting it began to appear as if the late missionary had perhaps exaggerated the importance in which he was held by his gods, or that these, owing to the multiplicity of their heavenly engagements, had been too much occupied to notice his dismemberment and subsequent decapitation.

"He was wrong about this," Ig thought. "Maybe he was wrong about everything."

He sighed and walked slowly out of the forest and into the very heart of town.

"I've got to find somebody who'll put an end to all this misery," he thought, and he stood and looked about him.

In the shade of a Bo tree a number of the Sultan's children, among them the heir apparent, were squatted on the ground and playing at jackstraws. The heir apparent was a nervous, vicious child, who continually accused the littler children of cheating and slapped them right and left. He resembled his father, the Sultan, as closely as one mango resembles another. But his voice, shrill, querulous, and incessant, was his mother's.

Ig stood and watched the children. A number of grown persons came out of their houses and perceiving Ig and the great red loper on which he leaned, forgot the business which had brought them out and went back in. Only the king's children, intent upon their game, did not notice him.

One of the adults who had come out of his house and hastily gone back in was the chief of the Sultan's war council. This able military expert now by the simple process of cutting an opening through the back of his house and thereafter crawling on his stomach for a hundred yards succeeded in gaining the Sultan's palace and the Sultan's ear.

"Ig, the strong man," said the chief of council, "is without, watching the royal children at play. He is leaning on the two-handed sword which his ancestor brought together with two

princesses from an island to the southward. The sword is stained with blood. And I am of the opinion that Ig, the strong man, has gone mad and that he is running amok. More particularly I fear for the life of the heir apparent, upon whom the attention of the madman appeared to be more particularly focussed than on the other children."

"It is a pity," said the Sultan, "that I have this very morning sent the army back into the forest where the river is only a spring at the root of a tree, in order to set traps for wild women. We be old men, thou and I. But I would make short work of this fellow Ig if I had my army here."

At that moment there came to them from without a sudden sound of screaming and squealing and wailing. Then there was silence.

"Perhaps," said the chief of the war council, "I had better go after the army and fetch it back."

"Perhaps," said the Sultan, "we should both go. The thought is not an unhappy one. I shall then return at the head of my army and deal with this fellow. It is said that the ancestral sword of Ig is capable, almost of its own accord, of separating the whole into its component parts. We had best quit the palace by the back door."

But at that moment a knocking, firm but respectful, fell upon the front door of the palace and the two old men who had risen to their feet shivered and listened. The knocking was repeated.

"Stay where you are," commanded the Sultan suddenly, "and say what you have to say."

"Sultan of Pauru," came the answer, "I am Ig the strong man, and because of the shame and confusion occasioned by being lost in a red mist and coming out of it to discover that I had divided my lamented wife, Plu, into two parts, I have run amok. I have cut down in her old age Toto Shag, who was our nearest neighbour, and who perceiving that there was silence in our house after eight years of scolding and fault-finding came to inquire the cause. I have lopped off the left arm of the white missionary at the shoulder, and his head at the neck. At this juncture his gods failed him, and always in the hope of inciting others to do me a fatal violence I came and stood for a time watching the royal children at play under the Bo tree. But it is very horrible for a man like me to have

to go on living. Wherefore in the sure belief that you will order out the army and cause me to be shot down like the worthless dog that I am, I have brought you the head of the heir apparent. . . ."

But the two old men had long since tiptoed to the back door of the palace and made their way silently into the forest.

Ig sighed, and after knocking a couple more times, and repeating, though listlessly and without much hope, the detailed narrative of his amok, abandoned himself to the languorous noon heat and sat down in the shade to rest.

Then he remembered that his pigs had not been fed that morning and he started up and hurried home. Just because he had made a horrible mess of his life was no reason why the pigs should suffer. They were affectionate, trusting pigs of which he had always been justly proud.

Certain other chores delayed his return to the village. Bluebottles were making free in his house, and it seemed best to row the head of Toto Shag and the pieces of his wife far out on the estuary and dump them overboard. Running amok is often a slow business and he might have need of his house for several days and nights longer. Between killings a man likes to eat and bathe, to rest on a heap of mats, and once in a while to change his clothes. Between killings a man likes to have some place to go, and as the old Pauru saying has it, "Home is best."

So Ig cleaned house, and leaving a lighted stick of Chinese incense to sweeten it during his absence, returned to the village. The news of the amok which he was running was now, however, common gossip, and except for the pigs and fowls the inhabitants of Pauru seemed all to have fled. It is true that a "lifer" stared at Ig through the barred window of the Sultan's prison, and he seemed to hear soft incantations as he passed close to the house of the priest. But of persons who might be expected to stand up and fight or to revenge themselves for the loss of kith and kin there were none.

In their headlong flight the villagers had abandoned so many articles of value that if Ig had gathered them together and made off with them he would have been a rich man. But he was too much preoccupied with the business of procuring his own death at the hands of someone other than himself to think of worldly matters.

Fowls cackled and scratched in the mould. Pigs suffering from hunger and the presentiment that they had been abandoned disturbed the peace.

Baffled by the turn which matters had taken, Ig, after much aimless wandering in and out of houses and among them, pushed open the door of the Sultan's palace and strolled from room to room, from storehouse to storehouse, from shed to shed, and from compound to compound. But it was in a remote shed at the back of everything that he found the wild woman.

Her cage of heavy malacca, one of a long row of similar cages, was the only one which happened at the moment to be occupied.

She was a little, young thing. And at first glance she seemed to consist entirely of a pair of huge dark forest eyes. Such eyes are usually associated with suffering and emaciation, but the tiny creature's arms and legs and breasts were as round and firm as they were delicate and shapely. A knee-length petticoat of scarlet silk set off her rich brown colouring and the shadow of the shed was a sop to the Pauru idea of convention and modesty. She was no more than fourteen or fifteen years of age.

She must have been a long time in the cage, being prepared for the Sultan's harem, for her first words proved that for a wild woman she had managed to acquire a very unusual command of the difficult Pauru dialect.

"I've been looking for you," she said. "I heard all about you while the Sultan's wives were packing up and getting ready to leave. I suppose you know that nothing would so infuriate the Sultan as my death at your hands. What you don't know is that nothing would please me better. I am sick of this cage, and I had rather die than enter the harem of a snuffy and mangy old man."

"With one blow," said Ig, "I could cut through the malacca bars and you, too."

"Don't I know that?" said the wild woman. "To look at you is sufficient. I never saw such muscles."

Ig, the strong man, blushed and stammered in his confusion.

"But before you do it," said the wild woman, and now he saw nothing of her but her eyes, "I do wish you would tell me just what you did to make your life seem no longer worth

living. At least you weren't in a cage. At least you weren't being trained and educated for a life of shame."

"I was living happily enough at the time," said Ig, "if you really want to know."

And forthwith, eager perhaps for a word or two of human sympathy, he launched out and told her the whole story from the beginning.

When he had finished, the vast forest eyes of the wild woman appeared to be very soft and melting.

"Do you know what *I* think!" she said, and she brushed her eyes with the back of her hand. "*I* think you have been horribly misunderstood."

Ig sighed. And his liver, which among the Pauruans is the seat of the affections, warmed toward the wild woman.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Plepilune."

"Well, Plepilune," he said, "there are all kinds of women in the world. But you are different."

"Oh," she exclaimed, "how I boil at the thought of all the injustice that you have suffered!"

"And I," said he, "at the thought of a woman like you being shut in a cage and prepared for a life of shame."

"Just think of a woman scolding a man like you steadily for eight years! It's no wonder that you divided her into two parts at the end of them!"

"If I'd ever had a single word of sympathy and appreciation. . . ."

"Some people," said Plepilune, "don't ever meet. Others meet when it is too late." A pair of tears almost big enough to match her eyes ran down her cheeks. Ig wondered what she meant.

"But I don't think that killing your wife ought to worry you," she said presently. "There ought to be a death penalty for scolds. We have it in the forest. And as for Toto Shag —well, have you ever considered what a lot of money it costs to keep perfectly worthless old women alive? There's two deaths at least for which the community ought to be grateful."

"But the white man and the heir apparent . . ." protested Ig.

"Do you think it's a pretty thing to go out of your way to insult other people's gods and try to make them change

them?" asked Plepilune. "Because I don't. And in the forest we have a death penalty for just that sort of thing. The heir apparent was a spoiled brat. He was only eleven years old, but he was continually boasting about the wild women he was going to capture and have in his harem when he grew up. And now. . . ."

"But," said Ig, "all that you say is doubtless true enough. You are wiser than I. But I don't for the life of me see how your death could benefit anybody."

"Or my life—in a cage."

"I will get you out of the cage in two shakes of a pig's tail. Crouch in the corner."

She crouched, and Ig hewed away the opposite corner of the cage with a single swish of the decapitator.

Plepilune came out of the cage and, reaching up, she tried to clasp Ig's huge biceps with her little hand.

"I think," said she, "that you must be the strongest man in the world. I don't see why you should be so earnest to get yourself killed. I don't think you've done anything to be ashamed of."

"Who now," said Ig, "would ever think of me without laughing? Who now would give me his daughter to replace the wife that I have lost?"

"There's such a thing—I have heard of such things in the forest—as a daughter giving herself. But unless you intend to go on living and to fulfill your obvious destiny she would be all kinds of a fool to give herself to you."

"My obvious destiny?" asked Ig, his forehead all knotted with bepuzzlement.

"Take me to the throne room, and I will tell you what I mean."

The Sultan of Pauru has a throne of teak and ivory with a canopy of choice feathers. Plepilune made Ig stand with his back to the throne. She wanted to show him something, she said. Then she gave him a sudden push in the stomach which caused him to double up and sit down. Then she cried:

"Don't move! You look wonderful—*too* wonderful!"

And all at once, as if pressed down by the wonderfulness of him sitting there, she sank to her knees and bent over forward until her forehead was pressing his foot.

Ig blushed with embarrassment. But the toes of his foot curled with pleasure.

From her low obeisance the wild woman rose slowly and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"Your obvious destiny," she said, "is to be Sultan of Pauru. . . . Now don't contradict me!"

"But," objected Ig, "the Sultan—the real Sultan—will return in a few days at the head of the army."

"In the meanwhile," said Plepilune, "we shall go from house to house feeding the abandoned pigs and gathering up the eggs as the fowls lay them. When the Sultan returns at the head of the army they will be two hundred men who have no wish to die pitted against one man who so far as they know has no wish to live, and who furthermore is the strongest man in the world and the most skilful at hacking."

Ig was silent for a long time. His slow mind was actually working. A glimmer of personal ambition was in his eye.

"The victory," said Plepilune, "would rest with you."

Another silence.

"Besides *yours*," then said Plepilune, "there is only one real brain in the whole of Pauru. Blabu—the priest."

"He did not flee with the others."

"He counts upon the gods whom he serves and recommends and even insists on. He only is dangerous to you. He is a plotter, a greedy self-seeker. . . . As for his gods, they are made of wood and brass and wouldn't hurt a rabbit unless they fell on it. . . . Shall I wait here for you?"

Ig went, and after a time returned carrying the head of the priest.

"Good," said Plepilune. "And now there remains only the prisoner in the prison and the madmen in the House of Skulls. You had best spare the prisoner for the present as he may be useful to you, but the madmen will always be mad, and it is a lot of trouble to feed them and expensive besides."

In a little while Ig returned. But this time he kept rubbing the palm of his right hand.

"There were a good many of them," he said, "and I think I have got what is called a stone bruise."

"Let *me* see."

She lifted his palm close to her face.

"Is *that* where it hurts?"

"Yes."

She pressed her lips to the spot and thereafter laughed softly.

Ig stood looking at her and the red colour mounted under his brown skin to his eyes. He had difficulty in saying what he wanted to say. At length he succeeded in blurting it out.

"No parent," he said, "after all that has happened would ever entrust a daughter to my keeping. . . . But awhile ago you said something about a daughter giving herself, and. . . ."

"Of course," said Plepilune, "she would never give herself to a man who was going to insist on having a whole harem of other women, too."

"Of course not," said Ig.

After a long silence he reached forth his left hand and covered her soft, firm shoulder with it. When he spoke his voice trembled. "It's a promise," he said.

How Ig and Plepilune fed the village pigs and gathered the village eggs and kept house in the palace, with the prisoner, who proved to be a jack of all trades and a jewel of a fellow, to help them, is too long a story to tell now. It is enough to say that it is a love story of the first water.

It was interrupted by the return of the Sultan with his army —not, as he had threatened, at its head, but at its end.

Ig and Bodo, the ex-prisoner, waited for them in the open space in front of the palace. And Plepilune climbed into the top of the Bo tree and looked on.

The moment the army came filing out of the forest, bristling with spears and muskets and bright with purple turbans and scarlet trousers, Ig and Bodo gave voice to the most bloodcurdling cries imaginable and ran right at it.

If anybody received the volley which the army fired before it turned and fled it was the sun, who looked down on the battle from his place in the heavens. The only person endangered was Plepilune. She got to laughing so hard that she nearly fell out of the Bo tree.

Ig and Bodo ran after the army as fast and as far as they could run. They ran until here and there in the forest they began to come across weapons and even pairs of scarlet trousers which it had discarded to increase its mobility; and

then they would have given up if they had not perceived just ahead of them an aged line officer who was swiftly disappearing into a hole in the ground.

They were just in time to get him by the feet and pull him out. In order to expedite his flight the aged line officer had discarded everything and was as naked as a young crow, so before conducting him into the presence of Plepilune they made him a girdle of leaves and assured him that he looked perfectly presentable.

Plepilune had a long, private talk with the old man, while Ig and Bodo slept off the fatigues of the battle and of the pursuit. And while she gave the old man his instructions she won his confidence with roast pork and fresh eggs.

When Ig and Bodo waked, the old man, nicely dressed and confident of a rosy future, had gone back into the forest.

Three days later he returned to Pauru with the army at his back and the head of the late Sultan dangling from his hand.

Ig and Plepilune and Bodo came out of the palace, and the old chief, whose name was Kerd, lined up the army.

Ig stood on the top step of the palace. Plepilune stood on the other step and Bodo on the ground.

The army threw its spears and its muskets into a heap at the feet of Ig, and Kerd, the old officer, threw the head of the ex-Sultan on the top of the heap.

Then they asked Ig to be their new Sultan and reign over them, and he said that he would. Then he made a little speech, with Plepilune prompting him in whispers, and he told them that everything was going to be altogether different and better from now on, but that any time that his orders were not carried out promptly and efficiently he would reserve the privilege of running amok.

As a matter of fact, Ig rules wisely and well and is a faithful husband to Plepilune. Now that Blabu the priest is dead, Plepilune is fond of saying that her husband's is the only real brain in Pauru, and not even old Kerd, who is chief of council, would care to contradict a lady.

Sometimes, when Ig and Plepilune are alone together, they speak of the amok which Ig ran in the old days. But in public this period of Ig's misery and confusion is always referred to as "The Revolution."

THE ANGLO-SAXON

By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

From *Harper's*

WE HAD been trying to wear out the Newfoundland fog in a corner of the smoking saloon, the Doctor, the Tinsmith, the Yankee Consul, and I; and the talk had got to grips somehow with the old argument of heredity *versus* environment in the shaping of a human career. The Doctor (to my surprise) held for environment; the Tinsmith (as unexpectedly) for the blood. Before I had had a chance to air my convictions the Yankee Consul took the word.

"There's a certain fellow I'm thinking of, and I've no doubt you've all known him more or less, here and there. This fellow is a Britisher—abovedecks an Englishman, belowdecks a Scot. You know him: worships the God and the marmalade of the street where he was born and maybe never sees it after he's fourteen—the kind that takes to the sea, and always has, and gobbled up the globe in the process—gray-sandy-red-headed, thin-beaked, moderate-spoken, thoroughly proper to his deathbed about his nails and his tea and his king. That's the man! Well, gentlemen, if there's one man in the world you'd bank on to hang to the habits and morals his father gave him—hang like grim disaster, Equator or Pole—if there's one, gentlemen, I think you'll agree I've described him."

The Doctor nodded and so did I; I know the breed. The Consul knocked out his pipe and told this tale.

When I first went out in the service (and that was a good many years ago) it was to take the broom-and-waste-basket job in our consulate at Tunis on the Barbary Coast. At

Liverpool, where I'd expected to catch a steamer for Marseille, I was offered a quicker and cheaper chance on a cargo boat leaving direct for Tunis on the following tide.

It was my first trip on a British merchantman, but it wasn't my last; I'll take the opportunity to-day when it's offered me. My stateroom off the cabin was larger and cleaner than I should have found on a P. & O., at my price; the food was plain, but plenty and good; the table talk (I messed with the ship's five officers) was as full of meat as I've ever found it at the captain's table in a Cunarder—and a good sight fuller, let me say.

In each of those five men, from the second engineer up to the captain, I found something to take my interest or my liking. It's the captain, though, that I'm going to talk about. He is the "hero" of the tale.

He was young; I'd hate to say how young, for they're deceiving. Young enough, anyhow; even though it was his first voyage with master's papers (as it was also his first trip east in any capacity in any ship). Young enough, at any rate, to make an American college graduate wonder.

His name was Abel Diplo. I've already described him. He didn't *conform* to the type; he *was* it. I'll ask you to mark that well.

I said "interest or liking." It was my interest Diplo took, partly because the breed was new to me and partly because, at first, he didn't appeal to the other thing. In the breed there are subbreeds; there are, naturally enough, Covenanters and Cavaliers. Diplo was the Covenanter. Character! there you had him. He was not a "gentleman." Eating once a day, going to night class, keeping his collars clean and shaving close—that was what had brought him to where he was, and at an age that would have made a "gentleman's" son turn green. Rock-ribbed, cold-blooded, Anglo-Saxon do-it-or-die! You'll begin to see why I say that at first he didn't much appeal to the other thing.

"You must have come down pretty straight from the Ironsides," I took him up one night. It was a moonlight night off the coast of Spain and we were lounging after dinner on the bridge.

"I?" said he. He gave me a queer look.

"Well, I was just thinking—you don't seem to have any

of the vices. Now this very business of turning down your glass at table——"

"Do you know why I do that, Mr. Gore? Will you have a look down there on the forecastle head. That's why' *That* sort of thing!"

I looked and saw what he was pointing at, the ship's two "characters," Old Perce and Happy Days, both of them deep in the bottle again. I knew them well by this time. They infested the decks; "infested" is the only word. I had wondered more than once how any self-respecting commander could have held his hand from dumping them both overboard the first day out.

They were as alike as they were inseparable, equally dirty, equally insolent, equally drunk. The only way you could tell them apart was that Happy Days had rings in his ears—funny old copper rings with jade beads. Happy Days was what a hard life had left of an old black bobtailed monkey. Old Perce was what the same had left of a sailorman. I can still see them there, huddled in the moonlight on the forecastle head, digesting their tipple in private, dreaming their dreams, scheming their schemes—two wrinkled, rum-soaked castaways.

"*That* sort of thing!" repeated Diplo. He sounded angry. "I am young, sir; I have only myself to depend upon; I can see the work of drink. That man down there, sir, once commanded a brig. Not much of a craft, perhaps—matter of a hundred tons or so, in the Mediterranean trade—but his own. And now look at him! Old Perce! The lowest, the wickedest man in the world. Imagine! He has a son, a friend of mine back there in Liverpool (else he wouldn't be in this vessel, make sure of that). That son, by his own will and work, is beginning to do well. Now sir, can you fancy a man being jealous of the success of his own son? Meanly jealous, drunkenly, cursingly jealous? . . . No, Mr. Gore, if you talk to me of table beer, all I can say to you is—'Old Perce'!"

Now, gentlemen, you can admire St. George to almost any extent, and even pay well for a seat at the dragon fight—as a spectacle. But when it comes to an after-dinner cigar or a story to swap, you'd probably do as I did after that and pick on the second officer or one of the engineers. And so I sup-

pose I should have gone on to this day remembering Diplo (if at all) as a kind of unbudgable, undintable, all-self-sufficient brand of Cromwell in a suit of armour, if I hadn't happened by the sheerest accident one night to discover that the armour wasn't Diplo at all.

This is how it was. I'd been noticing, anyway, for perhaps the last third of the voyage, that Diplo wasn't looking quite up to snuff. Nothing to wonder at, seeing it was his first command, and, still more, his first trip to African waters at all. I put it down to that, I suppose, and still should do so if it hadn't been for that sheerest chance.

It was the evening of the night when we were looking to make our landfall off the Tunis Gulf, just turning dark, I remember, and I was taking a prowl around the deck for my digestion, when I happened to come on Diplo tucked out of the way behind a lifeboat amidships, and being actively and violently sick as a dog over the side. Seasick, I give you my oath! And the water as smooth as a pond of oil. And the captain of the ship!

Well, I stopped. Who wouldn't? I suppose I looked like an idiot, poking my head around the boat's stem. He saw me, and I couldn't tell from his suffering eyes whether he wanted to lay his head on my shoulder or wring my neck.

"Is there anything," I hemmed and hawed—"anything I can do?"

He didn't answer. He got himself up and out from behind the boat, and, grabbing hold of my wrist (to my dumfoundment), he dragged me, literally dragged me, to his cabin under the bridge. He shut the door tight, pulled the hanging over the port, sat down on his bunk in the dark, and shook. Shook!

"Good Land of Liberty!" said I. "What's up?"

Never a word. In another wink he was on his feet, grabbing the door open again, rushing out. I went out, too, to go on with my constitutional; but it wouldn't do. He had me going. After one round I turned up the ladder to the bridge. I found him standing out in the starboard wing, taut as a wire, his hands grabbed behind him, his eyes on the horizon beyond the bows. Scared! Scared, I thought to myself, to his shame, of making his first port in command. But still I had to give him a chance.

"You didn't tell me, Mr. Diplo——"

"Ah? You know the tone. The fool was trying to cover up."

"What was wrong?" I finished it out.

"*That!*" he exploded. He stuck out an arm as long as a bean pole at the shadow line between the sky and the sea. "*That!* That—*Africa!*"

"Yes," I said, after a minute. "Yes, I think I know, now what you mean. I've had it myself, a little. It's—it's just the kind of feeling of it's not being real—the old romantic pictures coming back from your geography days—and your *Arabian Nights*, eh?—sheiks and pampered mares, remember and the Sahara and the domes under the palms and the veiled women—those old dreams——"

The fellow was on me in a flash.

"Did you ever *dream?*"

"Not," said I, taking another look at those pupils of his, "like *that*."

"I'd forgot," I heard him saying to himself. "I'd quite forgot, until the other day at the Straits, I saw the coast, and knew that it was *it*."

"What?"

He gave me a funny shivery look, and then he put his elbows down on the rail and turned his eyes the other way. It isn't often you'll catch a Puritan peeling off the crust of his immortal soul to any one below the angels: he didn't want to, but he had to, all the same

"When I was a lad," he said, "a curious thing happened. I don't know a great deal about it. I only know that I must have been taken to the theatre by some person who ought to have known better, at an age when taking me was a wicked crime. Or perhaps I may have been ill without their knowing it—some little hidden baby fever that made things dazzle a bit too bright. I don't know. I don't even know what the play was about. All I can remember is one scene, and I can remember that as plainly to-night as—as if it *were* to-night. On one side there was a moonlit city wall with half of a vast gate filled with shadow. Before the gate was a square all white dust in the moonlight. Across it, parallel with my sight, a row of palm trees filed away along a road running as straight as a ruler to the end of the world across a dry, pale

plain with little wrinkled hills against the sky. . . . Glue and cardboard and painted canvas? Yes, but how was I to know? How was I to know?

"And the camels—I suppose there were three or four moth-eaten chaps that came out of the wings—but always after I remembered them, in those nights I lay awake or dreamed, coming by hundreds out of that distance down that painted road, grunting and bubbling and stinking and tinkling their little bells, and groaning down on their knees in the dust. And the hooded men that came with them, the veiled women, the blackamoor thumping a drum under the arch, the ragged old beggar that ran with incense through the crowd—Adelphi supers in muslin, yes, yes—but *how was I to know?*"

He was silent a moment, his chin nested in his hand.

"Yes, I must have been ill when I saw the thing; for always afterward when that nightmare came sneaking to take me I remember the same sensation of discomfort, the same itching, gnawing, wailing wretchedness. It weighed me down with a terror I cannot name—the same terror, I suppose, that any English lad would feel for a thing heathenish, diseased, and unclean. And the worst of that loathing was that I *wanted* the thing. I *wanted* to go—go and creep into the silly scene and lie in the dust under one of those cardboard palms and crinkle my toes and hear the camels grunting, the boom of the black man's drums, the rustling of those outlandish moonlit robes, the gasps of veiled women as I reached out to touch their naked ankles, and all—all! I wanted it, craved it, craved the sweet stink of that incense in my nostrils again—lusted for it! I was so terrified I cried out loud—and all the while I *lusted!*"

He had hold of the rail, trying to twist it off the ship.

"I'd forgot! Till to-night! Till now!" His voice had gone to a whisper. There was sweat on his forehead, and somehow I knew he was nauseated again. "I lusted. I grew. I changed. As I changed the dream changed. I didn't reach up to touch the ankles of those veiled women any longer; they gave me secret signs, and I got up out of the dust to follow them—every night—in through that vast gate—through that city—into their red-lit rooms—red-lit and secret and heavy with perfumes. I—I—I say, sir, do you make out a flash on the skyline there, almost dead ahead?"

"No," said I, looking where he had pointed.

"Mr. Gore," he went back, "my whole boyhood was a fight against that sickening thing. But I did fight it—till I bled, till I almost died. I fought it and I beat it and it was gone, and I had forgot. . . . I say, that *is* a light . . *Mr. Andrews!*"

The first officer was behind us.

"Coming, sir," he said. "Cani Isles Light a half point on the port bow, sir, and five bells struck. We should be in the Gulf by one."

I looked away at the tiny flash (I could see it now that I knew it was there) and then back again at Diplo. He had his fingers over his eyes, his temples pinched between his thumbs.

"I'd forgot!" I heard him saying to himself. "Forgot!"

It particularly wanted diversion, that moment did. Something light. It got it, too, and from a quarter where no one looked—under our very noses, that is to say. It was Perce and the ape on the forecastle head. The funny old fool had got his carcass balanced on the capstan drum (and not balanced too well, at that) with the monk on his shoulder aloft, and there he swayed in a kind of beery majesty with an oratorical arm ahead.

"*Hafrica!*" we heard him solemnly pronouncing, "*Hold* Hafrica—'ome of shplendour and delight—*Hi* shlute thee!"

It was ridiculous enough; I didn't know, though, whether to laugh or not. I didn't have to wait long to find out.

"*Get below!*" I heard Diplo roaring. He had his body three feet over the bridge rail and his arm and fist another yard on that, and I wish you could have seen his face. "Get below, you rotten drunkard!" he yelled. "Get out of my sight, you blasphemous, vile drunkard, you! *Go below!*"

It was the finest thing in the world for Diplo; it set him on his feet, clear headed again, captain of his ship and his soul. You would have known it, to hear that "*Go below!*"

But Old Perce didn't go below. He got himself and Happy Days off the forecastle head all right, and fast enough, but it was only to hide out under the bridge. I know, because I was the first that happened to go down, and I was the one to catch it in the neck. He fell on me, literally, and literally, for a moment, I couldn't get away. I batted at his hands, but they'd been batted at before. His gin-pickled dignity had

been tampered with; his boozy pride was hurt; he had words to say; he clung; he puffed; he bubbled in my face.

"Called me a drunkard, did 'e? Called me a rotten drunkard, did 'e? Christ blind me if I don't pay 'im out for that! God le'me live till the day Hi see 'im get hisself so bloody drunk he can't stand on 'is bleedin' feet! God le'me live! The pretty toff! The lily-white virgin. The blinkin', bleedin' curate! Wyte! Just you wyte! Wyte till 'is gracious 'ighness gets a taste o' *bokha* into his coffee cup! Wyte till 'is prunes-an-prisms has a whiff o' the incense in the striped *souk!* Wyte till he see the girls in Bou Kader's shop up there! . . . Called the hold man a drunkard, did 'e! . . . Wyte! . . . *Wyte!*"

You'd think then that I should have known. But I didn't. I was too blown and rum steamed and generally contaminated getting clear of him to think of putting as plain a two and as plain a two as that together—not for another twenty hours, at any rate. And in another twenty hours we were all ashore and up to our necks in Islam.

Up to our necks? Over our heads! At least *I* was. I've lived twenty-odd years in Barbary ports, first and last, eleven of them in that same screeching, scratching, jostling, jumbling dress rehearsal of a three-coloured moving picture of a highly perfumed circus of a White Tunis, but I've never forgotten that day when I saw it new.

We drifted. There were three of us: Diplo (I'd picked him up at the old sea gate), a fellow named Maynard, from Melrose, Massachusetts, my immediate superior at the consulate, and myself. Maynard was doing the honours of the sights, but, Lord love you! I saw no "sights." All I saw was a daze and a maze of an endless rabbit warren of a bazaar crammed with outlandish creations on two legs or four legs, all colours of the rainbow, all stench from filth to hyacinth, all muck and silk and copper and clatter and hullabaloo. I simply followed where I was led, looking like an idiot (I've no doubt) with my eyes bogged out and my mouth open for marvel of it—of it, and of Diplo.

After his panic of the night before he had me guessing today. *His* mouth wasn't open, not a bit of it. His stalk was the stalk of the British tourist seasoned by five continents. He said "deucedly amusing," and "not half." He said,

"filthy beggars," of the men, and as for those mysterious "veiled women" he had talked so much about—"jolly curious, eh?" was all he could say for the slipper-slappers to-day. He carried it off to perfection, with only the least little punky yellow look around the gills if any one wanted to look close enough for that.

Even when we came into that old arched-over vault of the perfume sellers' *souk*. I guess I must have loafed away a good many more than a hundred afternoons in that place since, and if there's any Christian honesty left in me, it's by luck and the grace of God. For if there's a spot for a man to sit on his spine and dream his soul sweetly down the rosy road to hell, it's that spot there. It's always in a sort of twilight, like a cathedral, and along the striped walls the merchants sit cross-legged in their niches like idols in ivory with their tapers and crystals of attars and essences hung around. And the air is soaked and drugged: musk and amber, chypre and hyacinth for the *harem;* incense and myrrh and wax tapers for the mosque. I tell you it's like music—one full, rich, drowsy, voluptuous tone—one chord of piety and lust.

God and flesh in a perfume. Pretty thought, eh? Well, I had it. I got it through my nose. And standing there, I had one of those flashes that come sometimes. "Why," said I—"why—*this* is *Diplo!*" And then in still another flash, I remembered the old tippler's word about the "whiff of incense in the striped *souk*."

I gave Diplo a studying look out of the corner of an eye. His face was a mask: that is to say, it looked as natural as life; he had his hands in his pockets and his cap raked back.

"What do you make of it, Captain?"

"Jolly picturesque!" He slid his tongue along his lip. "Jolly!"

That's all the jolt I got out of that. Another was on the way, though. I know now that Old Perce had been following us all along, but none of us knew it then, and when he came bursting out of the bed-auction crowd at the upper end of the *souk*, rolling like a tub in a seaway, crimson, gorgeous, eyes cocked, arms akimbo, monk aloft, it was jolt enough, I say.

None of us noticed him, of course; we all stood perfectly

still, all praying to luck and liquor to carry him by. It was a close thing. One close-hauled tack was bringing him dead on top of us when another lurch and gybe brought him clear and sent him caroming against the legs of a couple of Arab gentlemen across the way.

They were really gentlemen, you know; fine old silk-and-ivory aristocrats of the True Faith, standing there innocently, hand in hand.

There was nothing violent. They merely withdrew their skirts a little from the contamination, and one of them said three words.

Maynard grinned. "Pig, he called him. 'Pig and father of a pig!'"

I wish you could have seen Diplo's face.

"What?" he gasped. "*What?*" he choked.

"That's right: '*Hallouf-bou-hallouf*'—'Pig-father-pig'! Serves him right, too; darn well right. By the way, Captain, if he's one of yours——"

He never finished. The old Arab had just put the only logical period at the end of his epithet; laying aside his cheek cloth, he spit calmly and truly in the sailor's face.

Maynard saw Diplo before I did and got hold of his arm, and he told me afterward it was lucky he did. I turned just in time to see the man's eyes. And it was in that wink that the lightning struck me.

"Lord! Lord!" was all I could think. "Lord! how awful! Father and son!"

It was only a wink. Diplo did get control of those give-away eyes; he did succeed, that time, in crawling to cover again. Turning on Old Perce, "Get back to the ship!" said he in a tone like a knife, and, giving us all his back, he walked away.

Naturally we followed him, Maynard and I, leaving the old sinner to "get back to the ship"—which you may be sure he didn't do. He was behind us again before we'd gone a hundred yards: I couldn't see him, but I could see Happy Days all right riding over the heads of the crowd. . . . You'll admit the thing had its elements. I couldn't help seeing in back in a mediæval show booth: good son, still staunch, tracked by bad father, still hopeful, through the Gardens of Strange Delight.

Well, as I say, we followed Diplo. We caught up with him. Maynard started in conscientiously to point out more "sights," but he didn't get on very far with that. Very soon I saw him rubbing his chin.

"Gore," said he, holding me back a little, "what's the matter with this man, Diplo? Anything?"

"Not so far as I know," said I.

"H'mmm!" said he.

We walked on behind him, and we had to walk, too; that tourist stalk of his was gone now and he was eating up the ground in straight lines and mathematical corners like a somnambulist in a hurry to reach the edge of the roof. Chin up, cap down, eyes dead ahead—going nowhere. It's no wonder that Maynard, who was supposed to be running the party, began to feel a bit up in the air. After a little more of it he suddenly doubled around and got in front of us.

"Look here," said he, "I guess that's about a day as far as sights go. It's getting dark, anyway, and they're beginning to shut up the *souk!* In another quarter of an hour it'll be dead as door nails here inside the wall. Eh, Captain?"

"Quite right," said Diplo. He stood there as tall as a steeple.

"Well, let's get on out to Frenchtown, then." Maynard took my arm and started cheerily. Then he stopped. "Coming, Captain?"

There was Diplo, stock where we'd left him, covering a yawn.

"Carry along, you two," he called. "I think I'll have just a bit of another turn about, if you don't mind."

"But, Captain," Maynard argued, "take my word there's nothing to see from now on. And besides, you'd get lost at the first turn."

"*If* you don't mind!"

It was the voice of the mule. Diplo touched his cap with a deadly politeness, wheeled, struck out stiff-legged as a crane, doubled around the nearest alley turning, and disappeared.

Maynard was mystified. He was also good and mad.

"That makes me tired, Gore. Do you know," said he, "what I've a damned good mind to do? . . . But no. I don't want the responsibility. It's not too safe in here after

dark, and he'd be lost after two twists. Come on; we've got to find him."

We went on all right, but we didn't find him. We went at a trot after a minute or so, and we kept trotting in and out and round about through that kennel of a labyrinth. It was dark now and as dead as Maynard had said—as dead as the tomb. I perspired; Maynard perspired worse.

"Look here!" he protested at last, pulling me up. "You brought this fellow along. Tell me what's the matter with him, so I'll know what to do. Is he crazy or is he drunk?"

"He never drinks," said I.

"Doesn't, eh? H'mmm!" He turned his head sharply. "Well, there's somebody that *does*." He pulled me a step out of the way of an elephant shadow that came rocking down one cross run and rolling away up another, Old Perce with the ape up and a gorgeous slant on (and not a quarter as drunk, I began to suspect, as he made out to be).

"Follow him!" said I, making a guess, "and I bet we find our man."

Then I was almost sorry. Maynard gave me a suspicious jerk of the eye and opened his mouth. But then he shut it again and pounded along.

My guess was a bright one. We hadn't turned three corners when we were almost in collision with Diplo himself, standing as straight and as still as a fence post before the wall of a house that had a lantern lighted over the door. Old Perce had passed him and brought up nearer the door, and he was standing with his head cocked, too, listening.

I had to ask Maynard under my breath what it was all about.

"Fête of some kind—wedding or circumcision or what not. Hear the music in there? Hear the women yodelling back there? Wedding, probably."

Old Perce thought so, too. He turned his head and wagged it at the wooden man before us.

"Hit's a weddin', hold son. Blighted Harab weddin'. Nothin' 'olier than a weddin', his there, my 'oly lad? Come along hin!" And, with that, he crooked the arm of invitation, for all the world like an old stager "taking in" the latest "bud."

Diplo didn't hit him. But he surprised me even more than

that. He stuck out one wooden hand, put it on the old man's arm, marched along with him to that open door, and marched inside.

Maynard got to that door in about three jumps, and wasn't far behind him, scared good and witless by the way he stretched his neck out to see into the hole over the heads that it was full of. But then I heard him breathe again.

"Well, I guess it's all right, Gore. I know this man—he's a courier at the Dutch consulate—and he knows me. In we go!"

We picked our way through a dense odour in a kind of entry-way and came out into a square court roofed with a striped awning, and so full of light that it dazzled after the dark. A dazzle and a daze. All I knew for the first while was that an Arab man with round whiskers (that was Si Mahmud, our host: he shifted to our shop later on and I came to know him well) cleared out a place for Maynard and me on one of the foremost benches and put a cup of coffee in my hand.

Have any of you ever looked in on an Arab's wedding carouse? If you have you'll know. They're all pretty much the same; same sardine pack of males in coats of many colours and red *chechias* tipping farther and farther over their ears as the evening grows; same bridegroom, painted like a harlot, seated by the same mysterious door; same plank rostrum in the court; same gang of hashish-lighted musicians, funny fiddles, *taboukas*, melodeons, flutes; same fat white dancing girls, twisting and clanking and sweating through the same unvarying dance (the dance, by the way, most sumptuously and brazenly symbolical of the particular occasion); same drugged air full of staling perfumes, cigarette smoke, sickly syrups, syrupy coffee—such as I still held grabbed in my hand.

"You've got to taste it, anyhow," Maynard warned in my ear.

It was burnt and sticky, but down it went.

"I thought," he went on, "that you said your friend didn't drink."

"He doesn't. Where is he?"

Maynard pointed him out, plain enough, sitting chums

with Old Perce in the forepart of the benches opposite. He had a little tumbler in his fist.

"But that looks like water," I protested.

"So does gin. But gin's a baby to that stuff, *boka*, there."

"I always thought, somehow, that Mohammedans were forbidden——".

"Ho, ho! So are Christians, too. Ha, ha! . . . That's the Captain's second round of that fig juice, and if he's not used to liquor, Lord help him before long."

"Lord help him already!" was what came to me. It showed in his eyes. They were taking on a stare, a kind of a ground-glass stare, that picked out one thing and glued on to it and couldn't seem to let go.

I looked to see what it had hold of now—and then I began to understand. It was an Arab on the bench in front of him, a place or so to the left, a youngish fellow in Egyptian fez and London-tailored tweed (they were both coming in then with a certain set of the Moslem dandies) and altogether the air of the man-about-town in New Tunis. But what got me about this fellow, and knocked all my old ideas gally-west (and Diplo's, too, I gather) was that this Mohammedan boulevardier was as blond as Abel Diplo himself—just as straw-headed—just as gray-eyed.

I've seen plenty of them since: it's natural enough when you come to think that the Goths and Vandals wiped up this coast along with the rest of the Roman Empire; but the point was I hadn't then, and Diplo hadn't, either.

Well, I know as well as anything what was going through his poor head, already sick enough with that "itching, gnawing, wailing wretchedness," and still farther twisted with that poison of figs—the despair, the fright, the magicking away of the one last barrier to his old dream: "Here's one of *them*, and God help me! he isn't a blackamoor or a demon or hippogriff at all. He's as like me—he's *so* like me that if I were to change caps with him, there he'd sit an Englishman, and here *I'd* sit——"

I know. I saw him lean over, all of a sudden, right across the monkey in the old man's lap, pick the fez from that startled dandy's pate, and cram it squarely and tightly on his own.

Maynard sat up straight. I felt him.

"That may make trouble." He was watching under his eyelids. "Or again it may not. All according—— Wait! Steady! If they'll only be amused——"

It was nip and tuck for the minute around the cheeky "Christian dog"; even I could see that. But it was hilarity that won—hilarity of fig and feast. One tittered. Another shook the finger of glee at the *roumi* in a Mohammedan hat. Still another, to pile it on, stripped off his own brown *burnous* and threw it over the shoulders of the infidel. It went even farther than that. A youngster hardly over fifteen had Diplo up on his two feet like a window image and towing away through the crowd and into a cave-looking place across the court.

"Nothing to worry about there," Maynard told me (I imagine I must have looked uncomfortable). "That's one of the sons of the house. Going to rig your friend out right, probably; that's all."

It was so. Diplo reappeared, prodded and shunted out between the benches by the delighted son; another Diplo, a gorgeous, silk, soft-slippered Diplo, hypnotized with queerness and petrified with drink. Joy broke loose. Hands grabbed at him from all sides. The dancer on the rostrum (a huge white Algerian Jewess she was) caught the spirit of the meeting, turned her batteries on the *roumi*, and danced her dance "at" him alone.

And, gentlemen, if you know what *that* means. Think to yourselves. I said the dance was symbolical. No, *literal! Sumptuously* literal!

Can you imagine Diplo—chapel and night-class Diplo—Diplo of the old dragon fight with a red-lit dream—Diplo, fetched up there, head full of *boka* and that screeling, boom-thumped, split-tone heathen tune, silk on his body, hyacinths behind his ears, and his two eyes bulging out to that mocking invitation? Can you imagine?

Well, all of a sudden he started for her. He went slowly, head down between his shoulders, chin out, never a word or sound. . . . It was Old Perce that furnished the music, Old Perce, come to glory at last.

"Carry on, my 'oly hoffspring! Carry on, my virgin lad! Carry on!"

In my other ear I got it from Maynard. "This," said he, "has gone about far enough."

He got out quietly but quickly. He caught the back of Diplo's purple *burnous* just as the crazy fool had got a knee up on the rostrum. I don't know what he said, but I saw the jerk he gave, and I saw the look that Diplo gave him back. . . . Old Perce was throwing the monk in the air: "*Yow! Yow! Yow!*" . . . There was nothing violent. Not in the least. Diplo made up his lips and spit calmly and truly in Maynard's face, that was all.

Then there was a riot. . . . Maynard got to me. He was as white as a dead one, to his lips. "The man's drunk now. I can't touch him now. When he's sobered off he'll fight. *You* will see to that, Gore."

"All right," said I, solemn enough. "But where's he gone now?"

Maynard jumped on a bench at that. He'd got an interest in Diplo now—a personal interest to see that he came through to the day of vengeance alive and whole.

"There!" he yelled. "Out of the door there! Come fast!"

I got behind him. It was football work. Si Mahmud helped us finally, and a worried man he looked. He told me afterward he was happy enough to see us out of there. He couldn't have been any gladder than I was, I know that. I took one good drink of the outside air and started after Maynard down the street.

"Gone this way?" I called.

"Yes, running like an elephant in a tent! Saw him just now!"

Well, we footed along, raising racket enough to wake the dead in that graveyard maze. Maze it was, too. I couldn't count the corners we banged against nor the blind walls that doubled us back on our own trail. Then there was a grunt and a scuffle, and we'd caught a man.

A man and a monkey, too. It was Old Perce, the tightness (or the pretense of it) gone out of his carcass for good. He actually wailed.

"Where's 'e *gone?* Gord forgi' me!" he chattered and he wailed.

"That's the question," said Maynard, "where *has* he gone?"

We stood there in the dark. By and by we began to walk. There was no use running (no use even moving, for the matter of that). Figure for yourselves: there couldn't have been less than two hundred passages in that sepulchre of an old town, all crisscrossed, all blank, all alike, and all as dark as the pit itself. Hunting a needle in a haystack is one thing; hunting a man who doesn't want to be found in an Arab town—a man drunk on a fixed idea—is another.

I can't say how long it was. I only know we walked miles, that I had blisters the size of quarters on my feet, that I hadn't eaten in years, and that, finally, I resigned.

"That's enough!" said I, pulling up. "Let him go hang!"

"No!" said Maynard. "Not for a million dollars I won't."

The old man had been keeping up his "Gord forgi' me!" every minute of the time. Now he put a hand to his head and changed his tune.

"'Ark, sir! 'Ark to me now. What course from 'ere would fetch us quickest to the *Bab Kebir?*"

"*Bab Kebir?* Now what in the name of the silly devil——" Maynard stopped and started to scowl at him. Then he turned his head and cocked his ear the other way. "No," said he, "but hark to *that!*"

There was a row somewhere; something had come to life at last in the town of the dead. A thump and a groan it sounded, far off. . . . Maynard was already on his way. I caught up with him, trailing Perce behind.

We went down this alley and up that one and came to the corner of a lane where there was the beginning of a light. The light came toward us; the thump and groan grew louder, coming, too. Maynard took one look, and then he put out his arms and herded us back into our alley again.

"No," said he. "It's just as well to keep on the safest side there is. Get into this doorway here."

"What's it about?" I had to ask him.

"The *Aissaoui*—the Mohammedan Society of Jesus. Bound home for their mosque, I guess. They've been out to a torture party somewhere. Get back."

They were already on us. A line of torches swung past the alley mouth, ducking to the roll of those narrow drums of theirs and that damned chant mixed up of a cough and a

curse and a groan. I had to peek. I saw them ranked the width of the street, shoulders locked, faces jerked back in the glare and thrown down to their knees again with a perfect surf of their greasy scalp locks whipping the air. Stripped to the waist they were, and their hides looked green. I saw the steel skewers stuck between their ribs and through their necks. Ugh! I don't like them.

Well, on they rolled, three wild and woolly ranks, and behind them a ruck of rooters and hangers-on, going through the same motions of that hellion rite, coughing and moaning and throwing their silly heads.

It was the old tanker that saw. He was out of that door on the jump.

"There! There's my lad! Hi sawr 'im! S'welp me, I sawr 'im, Hi did!"

It was bosh, but he had us craning out of that alley all the same. In another wink he had us on the run. For it wasn't bosh, after all, and he was right as right. At the very fag end of the parade, grunting with the best of them, cracking his knee joints in tune, mouth open, eyes shut, loony as a living loon, was Captain Diplo of the *Gravesend Bars.*

"Nail him!" That was Maynard. Even Maynard—the one of us all who shouldn't have—even Maynard forgot to think.

We nailed him, never doubt. I got him the finest of tackles from the rear, *burnous* and all. Old Perce had an ankle somewhere below. Enough!

That was where the bomb went off. I wish you could have heard the Mohammedan Society of Jesus go up then. And I wish you could have felt it come down. The last I felt was a foot in my neck. The last I saw was stars.

The longer I lived in Barbary the less I could understand why we weren't all *three* laid away. I thought I was at the time, but I woke up. Maynard was over me. Four Zouaves of the patrol were over Old Perce across the way. I got up. I felt me over. Nothing was gone.

Maynard said: "Thank God! That leaves only one."

"Who? What?"

"I'm afraid the old man's got it."

I went over and looked down between the soldiers. One of

them had a bull's-eye, throwing the light on the sailor. One look was enough. He'd got a knife in the wrong place and come to the end of his cruise.

Not quite enough, though. His eyes opened. I got on a knee and put my ear down. He wasn't talking too loud.

"That's *my* son. My *boy*. My name's Diplo, too. Hi'm goin' to 'Ell, but 'e'll make a name o' that. Honly you go' to find 'im. Pass me a hoath, mate. Find 'im and get 'im clear o' 'ere. A hoath, mate——"

Perce's eyes closed again. The soldiers took him up, bu he was dead.

I tell you, gentlemen, it was queer. Marching out of tha dead city in the dead of night, carrying the dead. It was to sudden and tragic and pathetic and plain queer. I couldn' think why; not for a long time.

Then it came to me. It was that old fellow's sudden loneliness.

"Maynard," said I, catching up, "where's the monkey gone?"

"How should I know? Scared cross-eyed over the house-tops, probably. That's not the question, Gore. The question is: where's the *man?*"

"How about the police—or have you told these soldiers? About him?"

"I have not. What good would it do, now he's in with that fellow like poison; if I'm in luck I'll beat him to death one day; but, Gore, I hate to undertake to lose a man his job, with the facts and the hullabaloo. Look here, Gore, I want you to understand this is all bad! Very damn bad!"

Yes, it was. If you'd gone through that night and the next day and another night and another day, you wouldn't forget it was bad.

Every minute of that time was an hour, and an hour's a long time for men with their hands tied and gags in their mouths. All we could do was roam, Maynard and I; roam and stare at walls and chew our hearts to think of our medicine piling up with every one of those minutes, at the *Kasba*, the Residence, the British consulate, our own shop—everywhere we hadn't dared to go, and raise the proper hue the first day, even, finally, the second day.

"There's something; if I could only think!" I remembered

Maynard saying over and over: "My God, if I could only think!"

"This Diplo is dead," he announced, suddenly. "And *we* are in a mess."

That was the second evening. We gave up then. We decided to go to the British consul general bright in the morning, make a clean thing of it, swallow that medicine, and say good-bye to our two careers.

That night I slept. The trouble was that Maynard didn't. He was still trying to think. He had me out at four, in the dark of my hotel.

"Listen, Gore; what was it the old man said? Was it '*Bab Kebir*'?"

"Who? When?" I was sleepy and I was sore. "Look here, it's black early yet. That consulate won't be open for hours."

"It was *Bab Kebir*," he went on with his "thinking." "It's worth a chance. Get into your things."

He took me out in the dark and the cold. There were no hacks at that hour and we had to foot it. He walked me miles around that wall, and he walked me fast. It was almost dawn when we came to the *Bab Kebir*, and that was the first I knew that *Bab* was Gate.

Maynard stopped. I stopped. "Well," said he, "here we are."

"Yes," said I, "here we are. Now what?"

He let go. I don't know what with all his "thinking" he had expected to find, but whatever his fixed idea was, it let him down now with a thud.

"I must have lost too much sleep," was all he could see to say.

"Well, there are hacks now; at least," said I, "we can ride back."

"Give me some coffee first." He put his hand over his middle. He was all gone. There was a *kahwaji* there outside the wall; we sat down on a bench in front, called for coffee, and put our heads in our hands to wait.

Well, I suppose this story would never have been told if I'd *kept* my head there; that is, if I hadn't peeked. Idly, you know, between my fingers. Then I sat up. I think my hair actually did stand on end.

You wouldn't see it nowadays; it's all cluttered up with Maltese drinking shops and French apartments. But this is what I saw then, between my fingers. On my right stood the city wall and the gate, the "vast gate," filled with shadow Before me, before the gate, spread a square all powdered with white dust. Across the square a row of palm trees ran to pick up a road that lay away straight as a ruler to the world's end— a "painted road across a painted plain" that broke into naked, wrinkled hills against the farthest sky. . . . There it stood between my fingers, coloured to the life in three dimensions, the stage scene of Abel Diplo's dream. Even to the camels. . . . There wasn't any moon, to be sure, but that tricky cold gray before the dawn did well enough for that There was no blackamoor pounding a drum under the arch, but there were Soudan porters asleep there, and a nomad beggar man that might well enough have run with incense while the moon still shone, and at least one veiled female (an awful skinny old one) early at the fountain under the wall.

Yes, it was all there, gentlemen: even to a *burnous*-bundled Arab snoring in the dust under the tree where Diplo had "lusted" (remember?) to creep and lie and "crinkle his toes." It wasn't Diplo's "show"; it was the cold gray dawn of the morning after, and the "supers from Adelphi" were beginning to stretch and rub their eyes. Some of them kicked the "property camels," and the camels yawned, too, and got their hulks out of the dust, groaning and tinkling their little bells, and began to stretch out along that "painted road"—some little market caravan, I've no doubt, bound for home again behind the Zaghouan hills.

I took my hands down. I suppose I must have been puffing like a pig.

"What's wrong?" Maynard jogged my elbow. "Here's the coffee come. Here! . . . What *are* you staring at?"

I was staring at that *burnous* under the tree. The *burnous*, upended on its inside haunches, was staring at the caravan, staring and scratching its inside head and staring again. And before I knew it, there it was on its legs, shaking out its folds and starting off at a clock-work, sleep-walk jog along that desert road, "painted" for certain now in the red of dawn. And what its folds had shaken out was following at a hop and skip in the dust—a little monkey as black as sin.

Well, I followed, too; it wasn't sleep walking, either, it was a sprint. Happy Days was the first to know. I must have put a foot on his tail; Maynard told me afterward that the little demon let out a yell, looped four loops, and went up a tree. I didn't know. I'd got my hand in that purple *burnous* by that and wrapped three times around for luck.

"Diplo!" said I. Just like that.

He turned and he gave me a look. For one wild wink I'd thought I'd been fooled. The fellow had a knife slash down one temple and cheek, a festering, fly-blown gouge; there was a three days' growth on him and the muck of all Tunis gone to powder in the hair.

If I'd looked for trouble I was mistaken. He stared at me a minute, clapped his eyes shut, opened them up again, gave a shiver, and "Gore!" he said, and that was all. Great round tears squeezed out under his lids. Next thing I knew his face was down on my shoulder, and there he was, crying like the infant babe.

"Maynard," said I, "get a hack."

That's the story, gentlemen. The thing was done and it was finished. Chopped off! I saw him three days later on board his ship, the same straight British merchant captain that had brought her out of the Mersey and would take her back again, not a mark for remembrance on him but that one knife cut, and on his sleeve a ribbon of crêpe.

Yes, he'd done that. The ingrained Covenanting conscience of "the street where he was born" had carried him even to that length of honouring publicly in death the filthy old, tipsy old reprobate he hadn't been willing to confess his father, alive.

He took pains to thank me, in two words, without mentioning for what. Then the thing was finished. Finished, done, rooted out, to stay rooted out (so far as I've ever been able to learn) till the end of his days.

That's the story, gentlemen, and if it gives any of you an answer to your question, you're welcome; that's all I can say.

"Environment!' That was the Doctor. "Given Environment A, tried and true! Given Environment B, bang! Algebra!"

The Tinsmith sat as firmly.

"Heredity! If you can't see how it's heredity, given the facts, I can't bother to explain."

"Given the facts." The Consul studied us around with a quizzical air. "Well, the point is, I suppose, that I haven't given you the facts. . . . No, wait! The facts I've given are facts—all except the fellow's name, and I wouldn't tell you that for the mint—he's left a family behind. What I should have said was, *all* the facts."

And knocking out his pipe for the second time he told us the sequel to the tale.

It happened about a week after Diplo left for home. I was out for a stroll with Bird, my chief (I was glad afterward it wasn't Maynard that day), and we were just coming out of the old town through the *Bab Kebir* (and I was feeling kind of funny to see the place again in the light of day) when Bird called my attention to a wrinkled old henna-haired witch of a woman squatted under the nearest palm.

"Want to buy a monkey, Gore?" he asked me.

The dame had us in eye, straight off. She fingered us to come, grinning and jabbering and kicking her merchandise out into its best light at the end of its *halfa*-line tether. The merchandise was Happy Days.

I stopped. Who wouldn't? Bird took my arm.

"Good Lord, man, you don't want that thing. I was only joking."

"I know," said I. I told him I didn't want the ape, but that I did have a curiosity to know how the woman had come by it. Bird put it to her in dialect. It was like opening up a dam in spring. It seemed to me, waiting patiently, as if she were trying to tell the story of her life against the clock, waving her old bird claws, jerking the beast about, thumbing the jade-bead rings in its ears, scowling and grinning and making a devil of a fuss all told. When she'd begun to run down a little, Bird shifted to me with a grin of his own.

"You wanted to know about that monk. Well, that monk is a romantic and historic monk—a sort of a bread-cast-on-the-waters monk, you must understand. It seems that a good many years back—well, let's see; she calls it the 'starving year,' and that *was* a while ago—in the 'starving year,' it

seems, this same woman, sitting under this same tree here, disposed of this same creature for five gold *duoro* to a rolling *roumi* sailor man. She sold it, I gather, in a job lot, along with one painted flute, one stalk of Gafsa dates, and one male off-spring of her sister Aisha-bint-Bkhar—a three-year-old kid called Abdallah, with "yellow" hair. Now, it seems, very recently, the monk's come back to find her. And now she's waiting patiently for Abdallah to show up, too, eating the Gafsa dates, no doubt, and blowing resurrection on the painted flute. . . . How's that for a romance, offhand? You wanted it, Gore. I should think you'd owe the old lady about one *sou*. Eh?"

I gave her the *sou* and we went along; and that's the sequel to the tale.

It seemed as though the Tinsmith had the word.

"After all, I didn't realize," said he, "just how right I *was*. How about heredity now, Doctor?"

The Doctor didn't answer. After a moment the Consul did.

"Heredity?" he mused. "Yes—yes——" He put up a finger and a thumb and opened them apart, like a man releasing a feather of thistledown in the wind. "Yes, heredity, about *so* much. About *so* long—out of a life. . . . This man I've called Diplo was torpedoed off the Galway coast on New Year, Seventeen, and went down praying God to save his king."

"THE WRITER-UPWARD"

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

From *Popular Magazine*

FURTHERMORE, Howaji," said Najib, appearing at the door of the tent and rousing Kirby from the perusal of a sheaf of month-old American newspapers, "furthermore, Howaji, it is a pleasureful thing to be thus bewritten upward. But——"

"What?" queried Logan Kirby, glancing at him in perplexity.

"To be written upward, of an assuredly," repeated Najib, adding, as Kirby's brain failed to grasp his meaning, "by this Melvin person, Howaji. You told me, yourself, he came himself hitherward from over than six thousand miles to bewrite us upward. He——"

"I told you Mr. Herbert Melvin came here to write us up," corrected Kirby. "Or rather to write up the Cabell Smelting Company's antimony mine here. That meant he wanted to look over the mine and ask us questions about its operation and output and all that sort of thing; and look over our books. Then he will write an article about it for the *Mine Journal* that sent him to Europe and the Near East to get a series of expert articles on a dozen or more mines, from the Hartz Mountains to Arawak—mines owned by American concerns and operating on this side of the Atlantic. That's what I meant when I said he had come here to 'write us up.' Mr. Melvin is——"

"Just as I speeched it, Howaji," said Najib. "I said it was a pleasureful thing to be bewritten upward. But this writer-upward person—this Melvin person——"

"When you speak of an American," chided Kirby with some sharpness, knowing the stark need of impressing upon

Oriental employees a reverence for the dominant race, "give him his title. Say 'Mister Melvin' or 'Melvin Howaji.' Not——"

"Excusingly, Howaji," protested Najib, stubbornly. "He does not merit it that I should be-mister him. He is not a Howaji. He is not a mister. He is a person. A hell-person, Howaji."

Angrily Kirby got to his feet. But Najib did not flinch. The fat little Syrian stood his ground stolidly.

"It is as I tell you," he insisted. "He is a hell-person. If he were not a guest and sacred by the guest law, it might be a mirthsome and wise deed to kill him."

Kirby checked his first impulse to break his riding switch over the shoulders of the presumptuous native for daring to speak thus of an American and a guest. Something in Najib's unwontedly tense earnestness made him pause.

Logan Kirby had lived long enough in the East to learn more about Oriental nature than it is granted to ninety-nine Occidentals in a hundred. Here, apparently, was something out of the common—something which might make inquiry wiser than chastisement.

Kirby had been born in Syria. And he had spent his boyhood in his father's big mission house at Nabous. Going to New York, he had taken the "mines course" at Columbia and had found a job with the Cabell Smelting Company on Broad Street.

A few years later the Cabells had sent him out as manager to their lucrative little antimony mine in the heart of the pink-brown mountains of Moab, three days' journey east of the Jordan. There his knowledge of Arabic and of Oriental human nature had made him invaluable to his employers in a thousand ways.

His mine superintendent and factotum and adoring satellite was Najib, a squat Damascene who once had misspent two blissful years with an all-nations show at Coney Island and who had acquired there a smattering of a language he mistook for English, of which he was so vastly proud that he would speak to Kirby in no other tongue, unless stress of overstrong emotion made him lapse into his native Arabic.

Kirby now stared in bewilderment at his superintendent. Najib, at news of Melvin's impending arrival at the Cabell

Mine, had been as happily excited as a child. For the two days of the guest's sojourn he had overwhelmed him with attentions. Hence Kirby's amazement at the sudden change of front.

Kirby himself had been as delighted as Najib when Melvin had written him from Brindisi of a projected stop at the Cabell Mine during a tour of American-owned properties. A laudatory article in so powerful an organ as the *Mine Journal* would do much for Logan's prestige and for that of the little mine in whose interests he was toiling so hard. At the very least such an article ought to mean a raise of salary to him and it might even lead to his transfer to some less God-forsaken region.

Thus, he had granted to Melvin every facility for seeing the mine at its best; and he had offered the journalist the cream of such rough-and-ready hospitality as the mine afforded.

Now, during the guest's brief absence on a morning's ride among the nearer hills, Najib had come to him with this hint of unpleasantness.

"Speak up!" commanded Kirby. "Say whatever you've got to say. Forget, for once, that you're an Oriental, and come to the point. What are you driving at, when you speak that way of Mr. Melvin?"

"I bewent me to his tent, yonder, but just now, Howaji," serenely answered Najib. "He had left in his *un*riding trousers his bunch of keys. One of them befitted itself right sweetsomely into the key mouth of his trunk——"

"You mangy little pest!" raged Kirby. "Do you mean to say you went through a guest's luggage and——"

"Only to put it into an orderliness, Howaji, if need was. But need was not. It was neatful. And in it was his portfolio; full of words on many pages, in groups, and all printed forth in fair clearitude with a type machine. And the first one entitled itself, 'The Grunauer Mine: a Model Plant.' And the article bepraised that Grunauer Mine and its manager as if they were Es Semme and the Prophet—on whom be the peace of Allah and the ages of the ages! I do not know what the Grunauer Mine may be, Howaji. But of an assuredly it is a mine of much splendour and wealth, if all be true that this Melvin hell-person has bewritten himself upward about it. He——"

"Najib!" groaned Kirby.

Then he gave up the struggle to teach this Syrian a glimmering of a notion as to his own depravity in meddling with the locked papers of others. Najib, missing the look of utter disgust wherewith his chief favoured him, prattled on:

"There were other articles, too, Howaji; all begrouped by theirselfs with a metal clasp. And some praised high the mines they spoke of and some praised low. But one was not praiseful at all. It was hell-ful. This one was not all finished. But it becalled itself, 'Cabell Antimony Mine—a Worthless Property; Wretchedly Managed.' It——"

"What!" gasped Kirby, amazement making him forget his contempt for the prying of his henchman.

"If I lie, may the Seventh Circle of Gehenna burn me to eternity!" said Najib.

He was groping with dirty hands into the folds of a dirtier *abieh* as he spoke. He fished out a sheaf of typed manuscript pages.

"Here it is, Howaji," said he, proffering the unfinished article to Kirby. "Beread yourself of it. It makes smaller of yourself and of the mine's management and of the output and of all, than the smallness of a flea. And it bespeaks itself merrily of *me*—of ME, Howaji—as a 'lazy monkey, fit companion for his boss.' Offspring of six thousand carrion crows and a trillion sick she-camels that he is, this Melvin person! May his remains find refuge in the stomachs of hogs and vultures! May his grave be dug up by pariah dogs! May his father's bones——"

Najib had dropped into fluent Arabic, so fiercely excited was he. Now, breaking off in his invective, he thrust the manuscript again toward Kirby.

"But read it for yourself, Howaji!" he begged.

"Take that thing back to Mr. Melvin's tent," ordered Kirby, without touching or so much as looking at the proffered papers, "and put it back where you found it."

"But, Howaji!" stammered the dumfounded Najib.

"*Tamám!*" rasped Kirby, jerking his thumb toward the guest's tent.

With a resigned sigh Najib pattered off to obey the mystifying command.

Left alone, Logan Kirby sat long and motionless, his un-

seeing eyes upon the pinkish peaks of the barren mountains that stretched away to the horizon beyond his tent door. His brain was in a jumble.

This man, Melvin, had come with proper credentials. He was a financial writer of some slight note. Kirby had often seen his name as author of articles and treatises in trade papers devoted to mining. The *Mine Journal* was not only the most powerful, but the most honourable periodical of its kind in America. Having been sent out to write this series of expert articles on the various American-owned mines across the Atlantic, why should Melvin have written such cruel and damaging lies about the Cabell Mine and about the managership of the man who was his host and fellow countryman?

It did not make sense to Kirby from any angle. He was making the very best of the little mine, in every way. Such an article, appearing in a paper of the *Mine Journal's* prestige, would do much harm to the mine and would brand Kirby, throughout the profession, as an incompetent. It meant the end of his career. True, he and the Cabells might bring suit for libel. But libel, at a distance of more than six thousand miles, is a slow and costly and difficult thing to establish.

What could be the motive for so blackguardly and lying an attack?

As Kirby sat there, the jingle of bells and the droning song of an Arab sounded along the steep trail which wound upward toward the mine from westward. Up the trail rode a native muleteer—the man who brought the twice-a-week mail to Kirby from Jerusalem. Across his pillow-like saddle sprawled the mail sack. The muleteer was singing, in Beirut dialect, through his nose and in one minor tone:

"*Seek to the depths of my heart, O belovèd! And there thou shalt find naught but love for thee. Thine eyes are like to sunshine. Thine arms are——*"

The inspired singer paused in this catalogue of his mythical sweetheart's physical geography long enough to shrill at his mule:

"*Iellá, abras!* Move, one-eyed child of Shaitán and a dead pig! Move, ere I rip the rotting flesh from thy useless bones! *Iellá!*"

This zeal for speed was due to his glimpse of Logan Kirby in the tent door. Kirby took from him the mail sack, unlocked

it, and shook out on the tent's deal table the pitiful handful of letters and papers and magazines. Pushing the papers to one side he seized avidly on the half-dozen letters—his sole personal link with the home land from which he was an exile.

The top letter bore the imprint of the Cabell Company's main office on Broad Street, New York City. This Kirby tore open first. And then for a space he forgot the others. For glancing down the typed page dictated by the company's vice-president, he read:

Herbert Melvin, the free-lance writer, is making a tour of Europe and the Near East, preparing a series of articles for the *Mine Journal*. But I do not think you will be troubled by him. He is likely to give Cabell Mine a wide berth. He is clever; and, though nothing can be actually proven against him, the people who know him best say he is twice as crooked as he is clever.

For example, he sent an emissary to several American owners of European and Occidental mines, telling them of his proposed trip and intimating—in a way that could not be brought home to him—that any private contributions toward his foreign travelling expenses, et cetera, would be repaid by a flattering write-up of the donor's mining interests out there; the larger the contribution, the more flattering the write-up.

I refused to see his emissary, who called here twice. Then Melvin himself took a chance and called. I saw him. He approached the topic of a bribe with infinite tact and said not one word I could hold him on. But he made his meaning so plain that I proceeded to tell him, very exhaustively, what I thought of him. Then I risked a suit for assault and battery by ejecting the miserable crook bodily from my office.

So I don't think you'll be troubled by a visit from him. He is likely to give the Cabell Mine the silence cure. Naturally, the *Mine Journal* will act in entire good faith in publishing his articles. Bates, the editor, is Melvin's cousin and is almost the only man alive who clings to a fond belief in Melvin's squareness. I hear, in a roundabout way, that Fosdick, of the Grunauer Mining Corporation, slipped the grafter a thousand dollars for the promise of a write-up that will send the mine's stock soaring. I don't know how true that is.

Kirby's reading was interrupted at this interesting point by the clatter of cantering hoofs on the trail. Herbert Melvin, spruce and smiling in natty riding clothes, swung down from his pony at the tent door, tossing the reins to Najib, who chanced to be inching toward the tent, and came swaggering blithely up to where Kirby sat.

"Great ride!" he exulted. "It's given me a wolf's appetite for lunch. Can we eat a bit early, old man? I've the rest of

my packing to do. I start for Jerusalem at three, you know."

"I know," said Kirby, heavily, adding, "Do you send any of your articles from Jerusalem, or do you wait till you get back to New York and turn them all in at once?"

"I'm finishing up the last one," answered Melvin, eager as ever to talk of his own exploits. "I've a half hour's work to do on it before I leave. Then I'm going to mail the whole lot from Jerusalem. The series begins in about three months. Yours was the last mine on the list. I'm going to loaf around Paris for a couple of months before I go home. So I'm glad to get the whole dozen articles off my hands and on their way before then. I—— Hello," he broke off, at sight of the papers and letters on the table. "Mail's in, eh? Nothing for me, I suppose?"

"Nothing for you," returned Kirby in that same heavy voice. "But one that is all about you. Here it is."

He handed Melvin the Cabell Company letter he had been reading. Melvin's alert eyes skimmed the pages. His expression did not change. When he had finished the perusal he calmly thrust the letter into his coat pocket.

"Unless I am much mistaken," he said, quietly, "that will form all the evidence I need for a five-figure libel suit against your company and its president. A writer, like myself, has no other asset as valuable as his literary honour. This letter assails my literary honour. And I——"

"And you hold that honour at five figures?" interposed Kirby. "Mr. Melvin, you are my guest—though an uninvited and undesired and dishonest guest. But here hospitality means more than at home. I don't wish to shame my hospitality by taking that letter from you by force. Kindly give it back to me."

He took a step forward as he spoke. Melvin's right hand went melodramatically to the butt of a pearl-handled revolver which hung ostentatiously at the belt of his motion-picture riding suit.

Through the open door, on noiseless bare feet, slipped a squat little figure. It paused for an instant behind the unsuspecting Melvin. Then it slipped out again, unobserved by the guest. In the doorway of the tent, on his way out, Najib paused only for the fraction of a second. He paused

to wink at Kirby, over Melvin's shoulder, and to hold up for momentary view the Cabell letter he had so deftly lifted from the loose-hanging outside pocket of the riding coat.

Then he was gone.

Kirby halted in his own advance toward the melodramatic visitor. Turning aside, he moved back to the table.

"H'm!" remarked Melvin, shoving back the weapon into its holster. "A gun is an excellent deterrent to forcible robbery."

"Robbery of what?" asked Kirby, sulkily.

"Of the letter you wished to take from me," retorted Melvin. "I hardly think you planned to take my watch, as well. The letter——"

"What letter?" asked Kirby, still sulkily; though he was at trouble to keep his mouth straight.

"The letter that is going to lose you your job and win me something more than fifteen thousand dollars in the courts," said Melvin, dropping his hand into his pocket to emphasize his words.

Then he went silent and began to grope fidgetingly through the voluminous pocket—jettisoning from its depths a gold cigarette case and a silk handkerchief and other articles of vertu; but no letter. After which he dug into the other side pocket. Then angrily he ransacked his clothes, pocket after pocket, and glanced about the floor at his feet, on the chance that it might have fallen out.

"Maybe you left it in another coat," suggested Kirby, unkindly. "Oh perhaps—more likely—you dreamed the whole thing. Yes, that must be it. You dreamed it. Now if only I could succeed in dreaming that you had been out here, disgracing America and the hospitality of a fellow-American, we'd both be content. Lunch will be ready in ten minutes. You won't mind eating alone? I expect to be too busy down at the mine to eat this noon. I'm afraid I'll even be too busy to come out of the shaft long enough to say good-bye when you go."

He walked out of the tent and set off for the mine shaft, leaving Herbert Melvin gaping after him in furious bewilderment. On the way, Kirby met Najib. In silence, the little Syrian handed him the purloined letter.

"Thanks," said Kirby.

"You are full of welcome, Howaji," replied Najib. "It was a pleasure. And, besides, I beliked its reading. I——"

"I'm going down the shaft," interrupted Kirby. "Let me know when Melvin Howaji and his groom have gone. I don't want to be disturbed till then."

But Najib did not let him know. Three o'clock arrived. Then four, and then five. Kirby sent one of the fellaheen to make inquiries and to bid Najib come to him.

The fellah returned with tidings that Melvin Howaji had departed shortly before three o'clock with his groom and baggage mule and said that Najib had received a message by the hand of some village boy, an hour later, and had also left camp.

Puzzled and vexed, Logan Kirby plodded up the hill to his own tent. There, pinned to the deal table, alongside his unread mail, he found a soiled slip of paper—the wrapper of one of his magazines—on which was scrawled in Arabic:

Kirby Howaji—on whom the blessings of the All-Compassionate:
Word has come to me of the death of my father's son and my half brother, Imbarak-Abou-Nasif, at Damascus. He has left me much wealth. Therefore, I go in all haste to set his house in order and to claim that which is my own before the effendina of the Serail can seal his effects. It may be that I shall be gone for a month. It may be that I shall be gone for a year. But I shall return. That I swear on the beard of my father. May he lie where rose leaves shall fall upon his tomb! I grieve to leave you without farewell. But there was need of haste and you bade me not to disturb you. When I am gone, think not harshly of me that I have left you nor doubt that I shall return. The way is long and there is ever peril from wandering Badawi in the mountain passes. And I am no warrior. So I am taking with me two of the fellaheen whom I can trust—for I have promised them much baksheesh. We shall all return to serve you. That I swear.

Logan Kirby swore loudly and fluently. It was bad enough to have his job and his future wrecked by Melvin without losing the services of his superintendent and two of the fellaheen for an indefinite time.

Luckily it was a slack season at the mine. But carrying the small force he did he could ill spare a single worker. Moreover, Najib was his one human companion in the loneliness of the long evenings when the jackals and wolves fought over carrion in the valleys below and the eerie

"laugh" of the hyena woke the hilltop echoes. Kirby was fond of the queer little native; he foresaw he should miss him acutely.

Shrugging his shoulders and calling to his aid such fatalistic Oriental philosophy as Syria had taught him, Kirby made ready to face the stretch of lonely shorthandedness. In the East one must either become philosophical or else one must be ready to face a nervous breakdown.

Yet the time dragged for the unhappy Kirby even more annoyingly than he had expected. He dreaded the inevitable day when word must come to him of the publishing of the article which would wreck his future and bring such cruel injury to the mine he loved. Eagerly he tore open every copy of the *Mine Journal* which the post brought. Eagerly he scanned every letter from the home office. He lost weight and he slept badly. This for three interminable months.

Then on a bright morning, at the end of the rainy season, three bedraggled men plodded up the trail toward his tent. They were dirty and ragged and thoroughly disreputable. Also, they were on foot, in this region where the taking of a long journey on foot betokens poverty. It required a second glance for Kirby to recognize the trio as Najib and the two missing fellaheen.

The fellaheen slunk off toward the mine huts down near the mouth of the shaft. Najib kept on toward the wondering Kirby. The little Syrian's dirty face was one vast smile. Before he was within ten feet of Logan he began to shout glad greetings.

"You miserable little renegade!" stormed Kirby, trying to be indignant. "I ought to discharge you! I ought to thrash you and then throw you out of camp. There's one comfort, though," with an appraising glance at Najib's rags, "you don't seem to have profited much by the 'much wealth' your half brother left you. He——"

"No, Howaji," meekly assented Najib, adding, "though for the sake of my family's honour it is but of a rightness that I should say if I had ever had a half brother, he would of an assuredly have been a most wealthful man. And I believe he would undoubtlessly have bewilled it all to me. He——"

"It was a lie, then, about your half brother dying? You worthless——"

"All men must die, Howaji," said Najib, piously. "Even half brethren. Indeed, perchancely, half brethren may die as easily as whole brethren, if it be the will of Allah. In His sight, all are of an equalness. If——"

"What crazy idiocy are you blithering?" snorted Kirby. "Where have you been? And——"

"This morning, Howaji," returned Najib, diving into his *abieh* in search of something, "this morning I have been past the Mejdel khan, where slept the post muleteer last night. He still beslept himself as we passed; he being a slumbersome person. So I beopened me the mail bag and brought the post. I—I counted the time and it beseemed me it would be now. And I was aright. See?"

He handed Kirby two or three letters and then held up for his inspection an open copy of the *Mine Journal*.

Across the top of the page at which he had opened the magazine were blazoned the words:

AMERICAN-OWNED MINES IN EUROPE AND THE EAST
A Series
By Herbert D. Melvin
No 1.—THE CABELL MINE: A Model Plant.

Brief Review of the Best-Managed and Best-Paying Concern, for Its Size, East of New York.

His eyes bulging, his brain aghast, Logan Kirby ran his eyes over the two thousand words of glowing praise that followed. The mine was described as a miracle of efficiency and of high-grade production. Kirby's exploits as manager were all but fulsome in their laudatory word-painting. He was held up as perhaps the only man in America who could have lifted so hopeless a venture from foredoomed failure to affluence.

Even Najib came in for a word of praise as a rarely competent superintendent and a born leader of men. The mine's output was exalted to the skies for both quality and quantity. Words were not spared to depict an institution for whose excellence the highest compliments were too feeble.

At the end of the article was the promise:

Next Month: The Grunauer Mine.

Dazed, Kirby raised his eyes from their incredulous scanning of the magazine. Najib, grinning blissfully, fidgeted in front of him. Kirby tried to speak. But he could only gulp. Najib, thrilling with the true Oriental love for story-telling and for dramatic effects, struck an attitude and began to declaim.

"Furthermore, Howaji," he said, "I enseech you to begladden yourself. We are not downward and outward, as we feared us we would be. We have much kudos and much raisements of salary in store for us. Wherefore, let us be rejoiceful and make merry. *Alla-hu-akbar! Mahmoud saidnah rasoul Allah! Ei*——"

"Najib!" gurgled Kirby, pointing shakily to the magazine in his hand. "What——"

"Be of a calmness, Howaji," begged Najib, dropping back into English. "Do not let my rejoicesomeness beget your goat. I will tell you. Hark yourself to my words of blessedness."

Then, patteringly at times and at times with dramatic halts and always with wealth of gestures, Najib launched forth upon his story.

"I befeared me that Melvin person might lose his way on the journey to Jerusalem," he began. "Wherefore I followed after. And with me I betook two ignoranceful fellaheen who are as my worshipping sons—because that I know of a murder which would emplace them in the prison for their life. Also because I bepledged that you would pay them a hundred mejidie each."

"I——"

"Of a patientness, Howaji, I plea you! We came upon Melvin Howaji and his groom at the guest hut at the foot of Nebo. It was late in the night. They beslept themselfs with sweet snore soundings. The groom we wokened. And when we had talked softsomely to him for a space and when he saw our knifes and when we beswore ourselfs solemn what we would do if he tarried, he journeyed himself away from thither with much speed and no noisiness. Perchancely he is journeying yet. For he went with much earnestness of feet.

"Then, while the Melvin person still made sweet snore sounds, we tied that poor Melvin person with ropes. And when he awokened we were carrying him from the trail. To

the shrine of the holy Fathma we carried him. He was of a willingness to be carried. Or, if not, he did not say he was not of a willingness. Though of a perhaps that may have been by reason that we had gagged him."

"Najib!"

"It was of a needfulness, Howaji. For my heart is of much softness and it sorrows me to hark the cries of distressedness. So I begagged the poor person. The Howaji remembers the shrine of the holy Fathma? Silly fellaheen think it is now the haunt of *afrits*. So they besteer them clear of it. And it is far off the path of others. It is a safesome place; and it is comfortful, too, except for the wet and the fat spiders and the fleas and such like and the darkness of the inside of it. And there that sad Melvin person has been beliving himself for four pleasant months. Until this morning. He——"

"No!" cried Kirby, in sharp repulsion.

"But yes, Howaji. He abided there for four months—that *we* might not abide jobless, perhapsly for life. A noble person, Howaji; and a fine sacrificer. For a day he did scant else but enhowl himself to a pitisome hoarseness. Then he grew hungered and most thirsting. And he listened with a little kindness when I bespoke him."

"When you?"

"When I enseeched him to take his little typing machine and becopy two of his articles, Howaji, with some small changes to them. I made him becopy that article about the Grunauer Mine and alterate its name to Cabell Mine and its output from aluminum to antimony and its place to the mountains of Moab and its manager and his superintendent to you and my lowly self. It was easy. For he had the Grunauer article to becopy by."

"Do you actually mean you——"

"It was of a difficultness, Howaji. For three days we had to plea at him and keep him with no feeding and with but such water as he could belick from the wet walls of the shrine of the holy Fathma. And the spiders and the fleas were of an evilness that wrathed him. Oh, Howaji, I was so sorrowed for that poor unhappy person in his hungriness and his thirstings and his fleas that I wept tears. I wept tears whenever I looked upon his miserableness. So I forbeared to look.

"But on the fourth day he sent one of the fellaheen for me.

And he surrenderized himself at me and did even as I had bidded him. Only, he sought to betrick me and do it wrong. So I unfed him for another hot day. And then he did it right. I read the first article writing and the second, side by their sides, and he had done it aright. Even as you behold it now. Then I encoaxened him to make the Grunauer article as he had at first made the Cabell one. And this he did with less crossfulness."

"But why on earth——"

"If all the articles were of a like sweetness," explained Najib, "ours would not beshine itself so gloryingly in the printed word as if the next one spoke evil of the other mine. So, when the two were done, I built me a fire and I burned the two articles and all his other ten articles in that fire, with much incantfulness. This I told him I did to belift a curse from our mine. But I did not burn them. I burned blank article-pages. Yet he enthought himself they were the ones he had becopied so fairly.

"In his portfolio were letters. One was to the sheik of the *Mine Journal*. It had been written the day he departured from here. And it was in a fine thick wrapping, with all the articles. It told the *Journal* sheik that here were all the articles and that he was bepostaging them from Jerusalem. In that packet I put the two alterated articles and I benumbered them 'one' and 'two' and I emplaced them to the top of the others. Then, while the two fellaheen guarded him, I journeyed me to Jerusalem and to the post-serail there and I beposted the packet to the place addressed on its wrap. I had often beposted our mine mail for you; and I had wisdom of how it was done."

"You blackguard!" groaned Kirby. "I don't——"

"He had told that the articles would commence to bepublish theirselfs in three months," resumed Najib, unheeding. "I had not a pure trust in that Melvin person. Even though he had thought he beholded me burn them, he is a suspicionful person. I befeared me he would send a telegraph to the *Mine Journal* to watch for a trick. So I kept him as my honourful guest until the first article and the second article could beprint theirselfs. Last night I set him at freeness. And he——"

"You idiot!" roared Kirby. "It was rotten enough for

you to do such a vile thing as to kidnap him and hold him prisoner in that hole of a shrine and tamper with his mail! But don't you know what will happen now? The minute he gets to Jerusalem, he'll go to our consul and make formal complaint! Soldiers will be sent up here to arrest you—and perhaps take me along as an accomplice. The mine is likely to lose its concession and——"

"Tame yourself, Howaji!" cooed Najib. "Tame yourself and become ungoated. He will do none of those wicked and ungratesome and treacherous deeds."

"But——"

"There were other letters in his locked portfolio, Howaji. And when the time hung with a heaviness I beread me of them. One was to his brother and it enbragged itself of the money he had begotten for each of the praisings he gave to mines; and how he was going to unbusiness our mine because Cabell Effendi—may he be the sire of a hundred warrior sons! —had insulted him in New York in the serail of the company on the Street That Is Called Broad. And there was another letter to a woman who was not one of his wives. And in that lovesome letter he told how his wife would 'raise hell' if it were known about the woman he loved. Forthermore, Howaji, there was a letter to a man who had been darkposting him—no, 'blackmail' was the pretty word, whatever it may mean—and promising more money when he should be in Paris. And there were other letters. I——"

"Good Lord!"

"I have them here," finished Najib. "I told him we should betreasure them in the case that he might do us ill. He will not."

"Najib!" stammered Kirby, dizzily, after a long pause wherein the little Syrian wriggled bashfully and looked expectant. "You mangy crook! If you had one atom of understanding as to the damnableness of the thing you've done——"

"And how it has besaved us our darling job, Howaji," supplemented Najib, "and won us kudos and baksheesh from the company's sheik——"

"Oh, what's the use!" sighed Kirby, giving up the fight and ashamed of himself for his own sensation of joyous relief. "What's the use!"

"Of an assuredly, Howaji!" assented Najib. "What is the use? The use is larger than one man can say it. And it is a gladsome use that will mean wealth for us. As your wise feringhi proverb enspeeches itself: 'When thieves fall out, honest men—honest men gather no moss.' Or is it that they 'make strange bedfellows'? *Bismillah!*"

TWILIGHT OF THE GOD

By MARY HEATON VORSE

From *Harper's*

SANTOS didn't want to go home, and that was a fact. He told as much to his mate, Deutra, as he clambered over the side of his vessel, the *Maria Virginia*. He said:

"I don't want to go home to-night. I'm damned if I do!" And to emphasize it, he spat in the water which reflected the violent crimson of the sunset.

"Why not?" asked the mate, though he knew well enough the reluctance with which many men married a long time turn their footsteps toward home.

"I don't want to go home because my house hates me," said Santos.

"You mean you hate your house," said the mate.

He was a huge, red-faced man whose belly swung as he walked.

"No," said Santos, "I mean just what I say. I mean that my house hates *me!* It seems, when I go in, as gloomy as a woman who never wanted you to come and who wishes you'd go. My house hates me."

Santos was sitting high on the dory thwarts. His well-shod feet were placed daintily where the lustre of his shoes would be undimmed. In the evening light the faces of the men rowing him looked scarlet. They gazed at Santos with affectionate and respectful eyes, for he was an able captain and a great killer and they were in from a great catch.

"You should have stayed in Boston," said the mate, eying Santos through his little piggy eyes which were like shining slits in his fleshy jowls. "What you need is a bat. There isn't a man who doesn't get tired of his wife now and then!"

In this simple manner the mate interpreted Santos's discontent.

Santos said no more, for he wanted understanding. The reason Santos hated his house was that it was drenched with tears and it was empty.

Santos's wife, Julia, was a plain good woman. She was little and swart and her eyebrows nearly met in a sullen line. She had been childless for five years, and for this she had somehow managed to shift the blame to Santos in a skilful woman's fashion. Then she had had a child which had died as it was born.

At this Santos's mother commented:

"It's too bad, Manell, that you should be married to an awful plain, homely woman, but that you got a homely woman an' a barren woman, too, is worse than any man deserves!"

After the baby, Julia was harder to get on with than ever. The first few times Santos came home and found her crying over the useless baby clothes he had been moved and he had petted Julia and loved her; later her tears had made him angry, for he had felt the lack of children to the core of his heart. The desire for children clamoured loud in Santos to make up for his swarthy, nagging wife who kept such a jealous watch on him. He could feel her watching him all the time, every minute, when they went up town. When Julia was along he could take no pleasure in the admiring glances of the girls who looked at him, for she was jealous in a covert, underhand fashion.

To-night Santos felt sure he would find her snivelling over the baby clothes again. He had a wordless perception that she did this to rivet his attention on her. But she only greeted him in an accusing sort of way, and after supper he sat smoking on the veranda, figuring out all over again how he had come to marry Julia.

When he was a bachelor he roomed at her grandmother's with whom she lived. He never noticed Julia for a long time. Then he saw that when he passed her an ugly red would cover her face. Next he noticed how quick and trim she was about the house. Santos was keeping company at that time with Nellie Cabral, a wild, splendid-looking girl. He was even thinking it was time he got married, when he

caught Nellie kissing his handsome cook, Anthony Silva. His pride and his vanity were hurt, and when he next saw Nellie on the boardwalk he didn't speak to her. Santos missed Nellie. He missed her kisses and her pretty, cajoling ways, and for several days he was misanthropic.

One night he came home and as he went into his room he was conscious of someone there. Then he saw that it was Julia silhouetted against the window.

"Julia," he said, softly, "what is it? What do you want?"

"You——" she answered.

"W-what? . . ." He had a sudden feeling of intense surprise; a sort of gladness swept through him.

She stood there, little and humble and very lonely.

"I love you," she said into the silence. Her voice was very low, hardly above a whisper, and clear like the note of a bell.

He found himself shaking with excitement. There was something in her sheer audacity that roused him and pleased him as beauty never had.

"See here," he said, "see here. I—I don't love you."

"Oh, I know—I know—but I love you—I've always loved you."

It touched him inexpressibly. It soothed his vanity, too. He admired her blank courage. His heart pounded so it hurt him. She stood there waiting.

The air in the room seemed thick to Santos. Suddenly he seemed nearer to this plain little girl with her heavy lips than he had ever been to any one else.

Caution stood a moment beside him. But she had bared her heart and it left him helpless. Then suddenly she sank down on the edge of the bed. He could see her dim outline shaking with sobs.

She had vanquished him by her humble audacity and he had married her.

But always she knew he had never loved her, and for this and her childlessness she had never forgiven him. He was a handsome, gay man and the eyes of women followed him. She didn't forgive him for this, either.

He was thinking of all these things when Julia joined him on the veranda. After a time:

"I'm going out to walk," said Santos.

Julia answered nothing to this, and he sauntered down the brick walk. The streets were full of shadowy people; they seemed eager and happy to Santos, who felt remote and cut away from life. Two girls passed by, staring at Santos with the boldness of seaport girls. They were handsome, with cheeks like apricots, and well built. He wished he was in a strange town so he could talk and laugh with them; but even away from Julia he was still tied to her. Her sad, hostile presence was there beside him.

There was no escape.

He didn't know where he would go. He thought he might stop at the pool room or the movies. But then the music of a dance at the town hall struck his ears, and indifferent as a jelly fish in the tide, he wandered up the steps. Santos, drifting in on a slack tide of idleness, all his desires adrift, everything in him slack, ebb tide of the spirit, ran into Victoria Sonza.

He ran into her literally, caromed against her, drifting as he was on the stream of inertia and disgust. For a minute they stood staring at each other, at first in amazement and then in glad recognition, as though the mute, blind self who knows no obligations but the obligations of its desires had cried out: "Here is my mate."

Victoria was a tall woman, and when this happens among the Portuguese such a woman is of extreme magnificence. Victoria's eyes were deep and melancholy; her mouth, darker than a pomegranate flower, had the disconsolate droop of a woman made for love whose life is unfulfilled. Her face was a pale olive accented by her deep eyes and her dark crimson mouth. Her skin was drawn smoothly over her cheeks.

Someone introduced them. Santos, with his eyes on this woman who suddenly seemed more his own than any other human creature, could not remember afterward who it was who said their names. He held out his arms and she came to them, and as they danced they seemed to flow along like two streams joined. This woman danced close to him, enveloping him with her nearness.

"Are you a single woman?" he asked her, knowing well enough what the answer would be.

"No," she answered.

Though Santos had expected this, her words were a sharp knife in his side. Then Santos knew that he loved this woman, Victoria, though he didn't put it into words. She did not spur his fancy as did the little girls he met on the street. She was not escape from Julia, or entertainment, or passion. She was his woman. She was his mate without argument or question. He did not tell her these things; he only suffered because both of them were bound to someone else. Yet he was glad, too, with an overwhelming gladness, as though he had always before been a cripple and now, with this woman in his arms, he was whole. To spare himself from the silence of confession:

"Do you live here?" he asked. "I don't remember I saw you before."

"We've just come. My husband just opened a tailor shop."

"Where 'bouts do you live?"

"Next Manell Santos's house. You know, the big white one with green verandas all around."

"That's my house," said Manell. "You live next door to me. I am Manell Santos!"

They looked at each other, glad and terrified at once as people are when in the hands of fate. The music stopped.

"My husband's over there," she said. "Come and I'll make you acquainted."

She introduced Manell to a little stoop-shouldered man a half head shorter than herself. He was a drab little fellow, who looked at Victoria with submissive adoration.

She kept her husband in the conversation, praised him, brought him out as though defying any one to wonder why she had married him.

The Sonzas and the Santoses became friends. They would all four sit on the Santos's wide veranda and Julia and Anthony would talk about their gardens. Victoria and Manell didn't talk; they had no need to. There were nights when Manell wondered that Julia wasn't seized with jealous fury. He could feel love stream out of him toward Victoria, his woman, sitting there quiet, her eyes burning him. But Julia prattled on about cuttings and seedlings.

So things went on. But every time Santos came home from a cruise he would see Victoria waiting on a wharf. She

would make no sign, she would stand there waiting until Manell was over the side of the vessel. Then she would be home before he was, her hungry eyes watching for him. One thing they had. When Manell was home they went to the dance in the town hall, Anthony and Manell and Victoria, for Julia would not go. Then for a moment, as they danced, Santos would hold Victoria in his arms; for a moment they belonged to each other. They said everything and they said nothing.

Then one evening Victoria came to the house.

"Is Julia home?" she asked as Manell answered her knock.

"She's up street. Come in, won't you?"

Victoria hesitated as though trying to defy fate.

"Sit down and wait," Manell inserted, gently.

For a moment they were silent, and then Manell reached over for her hand.

"Victoria," he began—and before he could say any more Julia and Santos's mother came down the street absorbed in talk.

Julia was voluble as Santos had never seen her, and she was angry! She was telling a long story to old Mrs. Santos, indignation in her sharp gestures. The old woman shrugged with the fatalism of the aged. Victoria and Manell looked at each other. A thought leaped between them. It was: "*They are talking about us!*"

All that night Santos didn't sleep. All that night his mind buzzed like a fly in a spider's web. One thing stood out.

He loved Victoria and she loved him, and to-morrow they were going to the dance and the next day his vessel cleared.

So as usual the trio went to the town hall, and during the dance:

"Victoria," said Manell, "come outside to the wharf with me."

They walked out proudly, defying the eyes of the curious people thronging the doors. A strong tide bore them along. They walked to the end of the wharf, keeping a space between them, not speaking. A shed at the wharf's end threw an impenetrable angular shadow. Manell drew Victoria into its sheltering darkness and would have put his arms around her, but she lifted a warning hand.

"Santos," she said, "don't touch me."

"Oh, you're a good woman, are you?" said Santos. "For all the way you hold me when you dance and the way I can't come home from my vessel without finding your eyes burning me." For Santos when he was angry defied the world and didn't care for consequences.

"No," said Victoria, "I'm only proud. I want everything or nothing, Manell Santos! I'll run away with you, Santos, or you let me be!"

Santos felt like a gutted fish. He felt empty and as though he had no insides left. He felt as if he'd been drinking and couldn't find his feet. It frightened him to death to think of eloping and it burned him, too. Thoughts crowded his brain like mackerel in a net. He thought about his crew and what they'd say, and where people lived when they eloped, and about little swarthy Julia sitting snivelling over the baby clothes.

Stronger than all of this was Victoria's courage. He could think of nothing to say, so he put his arms around Victoria and kissed her. She struggled and fought with him and he kissed her to submission.

"When will you come?" he asked her, though he felt a good deal as though he were asking her when they should jump off Fish Wharf together.

"I'll go to-morrow," she said. "I'll go any time."

He sat in his room that night feeling winded. Then he began to figure what could be done. He sailed on the next day's tide, and Victoria could meet him in Boston. Afterward—he could think that out later. He started to go to Victoria. The boldness of her beckoned to him. He loved her because she had the bold design of leaving with him.

As he started for Victoria's he met Julia in the hall. She did not see him. She was going toward her room. She was so little and looked so defenseless that suddenly Santos knew he could not leave her. She had in life little enough; he could not leave her defenseless to pity.

He found Victoria waiting for him. She looked like a flower over which a blight has passed.

"Santos," she said, "I can't. I thought I could. Anthony—he's so little. He's got only me. I—I never loved him right."

"I know," said Santos, "I know."

They stood together united by their relinquishment. Then Santos left her. Santos went aboard his vessel with the peace of death in his heart.

In the summer of '19 a terrible storm smote all the New England coast. It came down on the fishermen without warning, and there were crews and there were vessels who never saw land again. Provincetown and Gloucester and New Bedford were full of lamentations of widows when the storm lifted. When the hurricane descended the *Maria Virginia* had just cleared George's Banks, full of fish and bound for Boston.

Santos looked in death's eye with indifference. It was as though his will to live had gone out of his body. He had been dashed back and forth in the grip of love and the renunciation of love, and he watched the storm without the tensing of will and muscle that danger usually brought to him. Slack and indifferent, he gave his orders. He welcomed the storm's death-bringing fury. Let it whelm him in the sea. He didn't care. Let it break the sinister monotony. Manell welcomed it. It made his heart lighter to think of death, for Santos knew life was no good to him any more since it could not hold Victoria.

At last the storm came crying in from the far reaches of the Atlantic. Something savage and glad sprang up in Santos to welcome it. An ache for death rushed over him. He wanted at any price to be free. He wanted never again to hear Julia's flat whine. He wanted never again to feel Julia's damp, clinging hands. He could have shouted in answer to the shriek of the wind.

The seething madness of the storm closed down upon him. The wind came streaming down like the black madness of murder. Sound incalculable filled the universe. The *Maria Virginia* shrieked under the blow like a living creature wounded to its death.

Then suddenly, more powerful than the impact of the storm, sprang up Santos's will to live.

A single thought, unified as light, had come on the wings of peril. It was:

"*I must have* Victoria."

The vessel bent over to the gale and fled before it like a live

creature driven by fire. And then, with a terrible rending, her mainmast went and she almost with it, while her crew laboured to clear her of this wagging burden.

There were hours when Santos saw his vessel overwhelmed. There were hours when he saw himself and all his crew at the sea's bottom. And all the time there worked for Santos some unknown sense. The storm never conquered him. He was a puny human creature, but with some spark in him to match and conquer the blind, incomparable fury of the storm. He fought the storm for his love. He wrested his love from the fury of death. In after years the crew told him how Manell Santos rode death as if it were a horse.

The absolute necessity to live had gripped him—the supreme need of living that has dotted the pages of history with miracle and resurrection. Santos was born again and his new united soul could not know defeat.

Later, as the storm abated and, crippled but safe, he sailed into harbour, pity had been burned from him and old scruples. The thou-shalt-nots of church and town had been torn away in the storm. His mind was made up.

He stoop to run away? He would go to Julia and Anthony and tell them what was in his heart. For Santos intended to ride life as he had ridden out the hurricane. He had been saved to live. He had come to this necessity in the storm's unspeakable travail. This resolve had been welded in him by death itself.

He sailed into harbour as near a god as man ever becomes. His men looked at him with humble adoration. They had been dead men; he had given them life. More than that he had won back life for himself. He was reborn. He had left Julia behind as one leaves a dark dream. As though resurrected, he was coming to claim Victoria for his woman.

She was not there to meet him. No one met Santos. Other men's wives were there, but not Victoria, not Julia.

The women looked at him with veiled pity in their eyes. No one came too near Santos. It seemed as if a vacuum had been made around him. A feeling of discomfort grew on him and with discomfort came anger. His own men were staring at him.

What had happened? His men who had looked at him with

the adoring eyes of those who have been snatched from the hand of death now drew back from him.

Santos was used to admiration and respect so he walked up the street in growing anger, in deepening amazement. Acquaintances ducked past him in embarrassed haste, in their eyes this puzzling, veiled pity—pity for Santos who had been stronger than death.

He hurried along, his eyes searching hungrily for Victoria. She was nowhere, Julia was nowhere. He had returned braced for combat. He had expected to ride over the flood of Julia's reproaches as over the fury of the storm. And now there was nothing over which to ride. He felt winded as a man who jumps from a height—who feels the ground rise up to meet him.

He stormed up the steps of his home. The door was locked.

He shook the door and cried out into the silence:

"Julia," and again, "Julia," but as he cried, his eyes searched Victoria's home. It turned blank, empty windows on him as stony as his own locked front door.

Dread plucked at Santos's heart. Slowly he went to his side door. It opened to his hand. The house had an air of emptiness. There was none of the cheerful litter of a lived-in abode. It was as neat as a room where death had been. He walked through the house and as he did a slow, stealthy fear travelled up Santos's back, a certainty formed itself in the back of his mind.

Downstairs a door opened and light footsteps sounded through the house. He turned and faced Victoria.

"Oh, Manell," she faltered, "Manell." All her anxiety, all her love was in the caress of his name. For her he was resurrected from the dead. "We thought—you—wouldn't get back."

She was here in his house, speaking to him in the voice of love. He drew back from her as though to ward off her love in the presence of the wronged dead.

"Where's Julia?"

"Why, haven't you heard?"

"*Dead?*" cried Manell.

"Dead!" Victoria exclaimed, "no, gone, run off *with Anthony Sonza!* Who would have thought? Gone together and left us this letter—telling how they couldn't stand your

ways—your ways—my ways—any more. And the town laughing and holding its sides. Gone like rats—cleared out!"

She looked at him with the eyes of love. Then, her arms dropped, the happiness in her eyes changed to blankness. "I thought you'd be glad," she faltered.

"*Glad!*" he said; "glad to have everyone laughing at me! Glad to have my wife run off with a runt . . ." he raved, while in Victoria amazement strove with anger. She had come to offer her love. Secure in the delight of her mate, with joyful news of all difficulties solved, and he raved: "Gone with that rat. *My wife. My* wife cleared out. Oh, a weasel will mate with a weasel! Blind! blind! And I —and I—looking at them talking over the fence. I never dreamed. I thought *they* were *jealous!* Time and time again I've seen them and never dreamed. . . ."

Victoria drew herself apart, watching his fury. Then suddenly she collapsed. Mirth rocked her, the malicious laughter of all time shook her peal on peal. Her laughter rang through Julia's empty house.

Santos had landed from his vessel a god, master of fate, stronger than death. He was going to claim his woman arrogantly. Like a god he was prepared to trample under foot the small moralities. Now, behold he was the butt of the centuries, the most ridiculous creature on earth, a betrayed husband. Betrayed by his creature Julia, while his woman, Victoria, laughed.

THE END

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